the weekly Standard

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THE ASSAULT ON THE CIA
THOMAS JOSCELYN • JENNIFER RUBIN

A RAKE'S PROGRESS

Marion Barry bares (almost) all for Matt Labash

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You deserve a factual look at . . .

Mr. Netanyahu's Offer (I)

Would it bring peace to the tortured Middle East?

In a complete turnabout from previous positions, but probably also yielding to enormous pressure by President Obama, Israel's Prime Minister "Bibi" Netanyahu has declared his willingness to accept a Palestinian state.

What are the facts?

A generous offer. Since the "two-state solution" has long been declared to be the Holy Grail of the Palestinians, one would have expected that Mr. Netanyahu's announcement be greeted with cheers and hosannas. That, however, not surprisingly perhaps, was not the case. In fact, the Palestinians and all others involved declared it to be an insult and a "non-starter." The principal objections were that Mr. Netanyahu insisted that the newly created Palestinian state would have to be totally demilitarized, and that its air space would be available to the IAF (Israeli Air Force); that Jerusalem would remain undivided as the capital of the Jewish state; that the "Palestinian refugees" would, if they so desired, be returned to the newly formed state and not to Israel; that the Palestinians acknowledge Israel as the state of the Jews; and, finally, that he did not commit for the "settlements" to be dismantled. We shall address some of these objections in this message, the rest in a future message.

> "As Abba Eban, Israel's former Foreign Secretary put it: 'The Arabs will never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity.'"

The "Settlements." Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") is the ancient Biblical homeland of the Jewish people. This area is part of the Palestinian Mandate, which was declared by the Balfour Declaration and by the mandate of the League of Nations, to be the homeland of the Jewish people. After the 1948 War of Israel's Liberation this area remained in possession of the Kingdom of Jordan, which declared sovereignty over the area. The only possible rationale for the conclusion that this area is Palestinian land is that it is encompassed by the 1949 armistice line. There is absolutely no other reason. This area has never been Palestinian land. In fact, never before the creation of the State of Israel has there ever been a Palestinian people or a Palestinian country anywhere in the long course of human history. The Palestinians were never until recent times in any control over the area. At the very most, the area could be described as "disputed." In fact, a very good case could be made that Jews have a better right than the Arabs to live there. What a shame that even the leaders of our country cannot see this fundamental truth. And don't let's forget that over one million Arabs live in Israel unmolested and nobody gets exercised about that.

Demilitarization. Not so long ago, Israel unilaterally evacuated every last Jewish family from Gaza. One would have hoped that the Palestinians, grateful for being rid of the hated Jews and no longer having to suffer their presence, would have shown their gratitude for that "liberation." Instead, almost from the very first day, they bombarded Israeli cities with thousands of rockets. Eventually, the patience of Israel snapped and it invaded Gaza to put a stop to this outrage. It has to be clear to all that having had such bad experience with Gaza, Israel is fully justified to expect that if statehood were ultimately granted to the Palestinians, and if demilitarization were not imposed and strictly supervised, the Palestinians of the "West Bank" would be equally inclined to attack Israel on a daily basis. Instead of being confronted by the insular Gaza, Israel would be surrounded totally by those who are sworn to destroy it. Full demilitarization would have to be a key requirement of any Palestinian statehood. Without it, virtually all of Israel – its population centers, its industries, its military installations and its international airport – would be under the gun. Life in Israel would be virtually impossible. How could anybody possibly think otherwise?

Return of the "Refugees." During the 1948 War of Liberation, about 650,000 Arabs, goaded by their leaders, fled the nascent state of Israel. They and their descendants wish to "return" to Israel. That is a bizarre request. The principal purpose of a Palestinian state would obviously have to be the ingathering and settling of the "Palestinian refugees" and not to foist them onto Israel. Injecting them into Israel would undermine the Jewish state and smooth the path to its destruction. And that is, indeed, the rub. The principal intent of the Arabs is not the creation of a state, but, as they repeat over and over, the destruction of Israel, which they call the "cancer on the Arab body." And don't let's forget that about 800,000 Jews, who escaped barely with their lives from Arab countries during the War of Liberation in 1948 and during the Six-Day War in 1967, were quickly absorbed into the state of Israel and are now at least one-half of the total population. The Arabs, in contrast, have kept their "refugees" in miserable refugee camps for the last 60+ years, on the dole of the world – mostly that of the United States.

There is little likelihood that Mr. Netanyahu's generous offer, however it might ultimately be modified, will be accepted by the Arabs. Because, if that were the objective, they could have had their own state for over seventy years. But whatever was offered was never sufficient. As Abba Eban, Israel's former Foreign Secretary, so well put it: "The Arabs will never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity." Sadly, therefore, there is little question that Mr. Netanyahu's generous offer of a separate state for the Palestinians will again be rejected – most likely even being followed by another "intifada."

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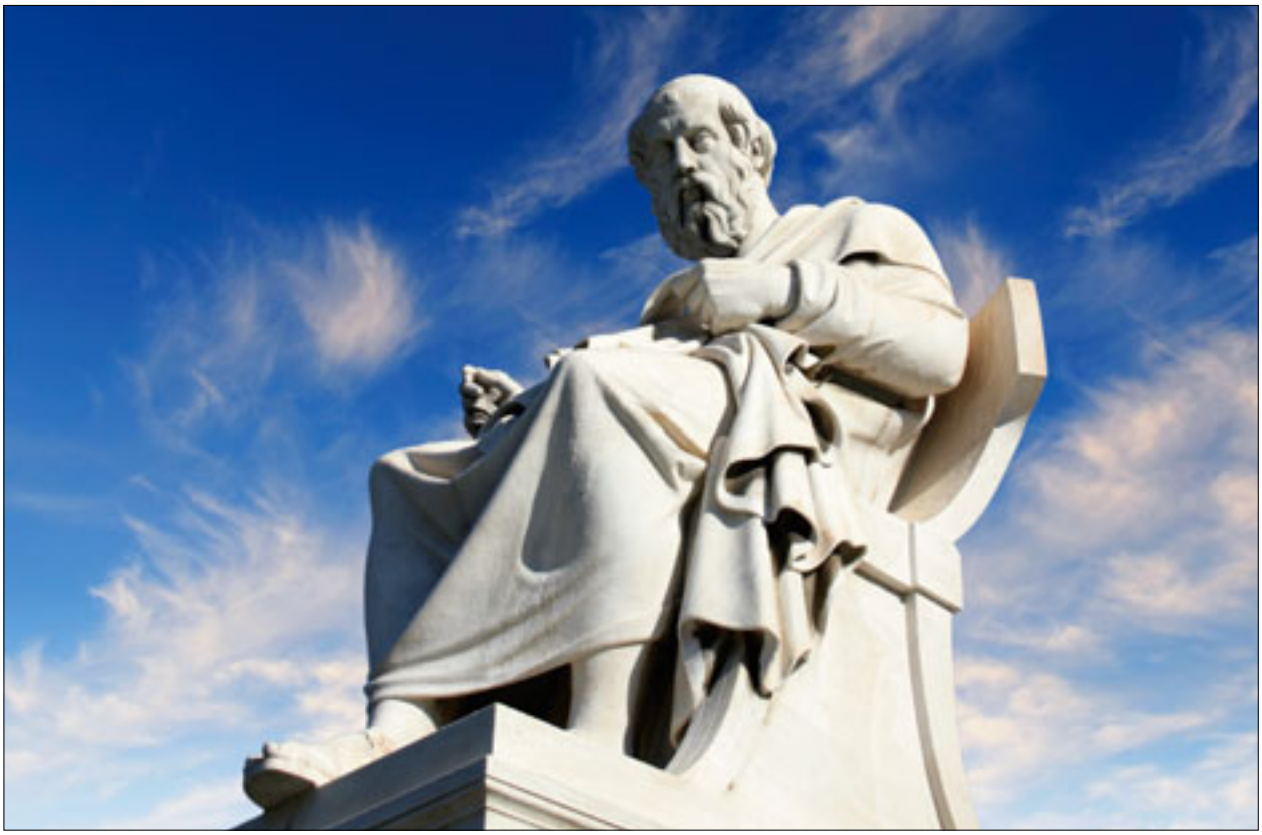

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Contents

September 7, 2009 • Volume 14, Number 47

2 Scrapbook . . . . . *Waiting for the Kent Brockman Award*

4 Casual . . . . . *Robert Novak, Terrapin*

5 Correspondence . . . . . *Michael Vick, Marxism & more*

6 Editorial . . . . . *Caving to Trial Lawyers*

Articles

7 Eric Holder's Anti-CIA Witch Hunt *Second-guessing career prosecutors for political gain* . . . . . BY JENNIFER RUBIN

10 Fair Is Foul in Scotland *The feckless release of a Libyan terrorist* . . . . . BY TOD LINDBERG

11 The 'Most Prolific' Detainee *We learned a lot from KSM, and not by asking nicely* . . . . . BY THOMAS JOSCELYN

13 Might Makes Right *Yale University Press blinks* . . . . . BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

Cover: Photo by Tom Wolff

Features

14 A Rake's Progress . . . . . BY MATT LABASH
Marion Barry bares (almost) all.

Books & Arts

28 The Magazine Game *When Scotland's team excelled* . . . . . BY SARA LODGE

30 Boys 'n' the Hood *Manhood, that is, and why it's elusive* . . . . . BY CHRISTOPHER BENSON

33 Church of State *How is the Almighty treated when He's a guest in the White House?* . . . . . BY WILLIAM MCKENZIE

34 Password, Please *The inside story on conspiracy theories* . . . . . BY STEFAN BECK

36 Thinking Big *Herman Kahn didn't shrink from the fundamental questions* . . . . . BY GARY SCHMITT

37 New Democrats *Seeds of change in unfertile ground* . . . . . BY JAMES KIRCHICK

38 Triple Feature *A once-in-a-lifetime moment in baseball* . . . . . BY JOE QUEENAN

40 Parody . . . . . *A screaming match at the White House*

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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Waiting for the Kent Brockman Award

The tendency of journalists to present each other with multiple awards—usually named for journalists, living and dead—reminds The Scrapbook of the scene in *Annie Hall* where Woody Allen, complaining about the self-congratulatory culture of Hollywood, imagines a prize for "Best Fascist Dictator: Adolf Hitler." Of course, given the downward trajectory of the news business these days, who can blame them for a little logrolling?

We thought of this last week when we learned the glad tidings that Katie Couric, news reader of the *CBS Evening News*, will be awarded the 2009 Al Neuharth Award for Excellence in the Media, recognizing her "lifetime achievement." This is yet another feather in her cap for Katie, who garnered an Edward R. Murrow Award last year, as well as this year's Walter Cronkite Award (Special Achievement for National Impact), and the 2009 Gracie Allen Award, given by American Women in Radio and Television (AWRT) for "exemplary contributions to the [broadcast] industry." (For our younger readers, Gracie Allen was half of the old vaudeville/TV comedy team of George Burns and Gracie Allen.)

The Scrapbook's initial reaction to this news was to ask, what's next? If there are journalism awards named for such professional blowhards as Neuharth, Murrow, and Cronkite, there must be one coming soon for, say, Chris Matthews or Keith Olbermann. For that matter, why not name an achievement award for the best anchorman on television, Kent Brockman of *The Simpsons*?

But that, of course, would be cynical. Instead, The Scrapbook chooses to acknowledge these prizes, and Katie Couric's excellence, on their own terms. The Neuharth Award, for example, is named for the longtime Gannett boss Allen Neuharth, founder of *USA Today* and the Freedom Forum, which runs the Newseum in Washington. And recipients of the Neuharth Award over the years include such distinguished journalists as Larry King (1993), Garrison Keillor (2005), Helen Thomas (1991), and Neuharth/Gannett employees John Seigenthaler (1999), John Quinn (2007), Ken Paulson (2007), and Charles Overby (2008).

We're betting on Katie Couric for the first Kent Brockman Award. ♦

Another Good Reason to Drive

The *Washington Post* reports that the transit agency overseeing the bus and subway systems in the nation's capital has taken a "harder line" on "applicants' criminal, driving records." "Under the old policy, a would-be bus driver was disqualified by two felony convictions within three years of applying or by three felony convictions within 10 years. Now, a single felony conviction in the previous 10 years would prevent someone from getting a frontline job, such as bus driver or train operator."

Gee, that's reassuring. So in the future, would-be bus drivers and train operators will need to plead their second felony down to a misdemeanor before applying. And those with multiple felonies will have to stick to non "frontline" jobs, like dispatch and safety inspections.

The Scrapbook's lifelong preference for the private automobile has been reinforced. ♦

The 'Death of Conservatism'?

Sam Tanenhaus's new book, *The Death of Conservatism*, is all set for publication—and it's already been mugged by reality. Listen to the news or look at the polls, and it's clear that reports of conservatism's death have been greatly exaggerated. Still, the book is good for a laugh. Here's Tanenhaus on page 23:

> The primary dynamic of American politics, normally described as a continual friction between the two major parties, is equally in our time a competition between the liberal idea of consensus and the conservative idea of orthodoxy. We see it in the Democratic Party's recent history of choosing centrist, explicitly nonideological presidential candidates (Kennedy, Johnson, Carter, Clinton, Obama), as contrasted with the Republicans' preference for ideologically committed ones (Goldwater, Reagan, George W. Bush).

The sophistry here is breathtaking. Tanenhaus not only conflates his own political preferences with the American "center." In order to prove that only the Democratic party nominates "centrist, explicitly nonideological" men for the presidency, Tanenhaus (1) puts Obama—Barack Obama!—in the "centrist" camp, and (2) totally ignores Democrats Hubert Humphrey, George McGovern, Walter Mondale, Michael Dukakis, and Al Gore, as well as Republicans Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, George H.W. Bush, Bob Dole, and John McCain. Indeed, when you look at all the major party presidential nominees since 1960, you actually

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find that more "proud liberals" than "red-blooded conservatives" have run for the office. Furthermore, it's actually rare for the GOP to nominate a dyed-in-the-wool conservative. Even the hated George W. Bush ran in 2000 as a "compassionate conservative" who promised more federal spending on education and religious charities.

The book's more-in-sorrow-than-in-anger tone is belied by blurbs from such noted well-wishers of conservatism as Chris Matthews, Jeffrey Toobin, Jane Mayer, and Leon Wieseltier. Sheesh. We wish somebody would give us cash for this clunker. ♦

He Doesn't Write, He Doesn't Call

The American Sociological Association held its annual meeting in San Francisco recently and, according to *Inside Higher Education*, the mood was sour because President Obama has not been paying sociologists enough attention:

> For sociologists who want to see social science influence public policy, these should be heady times. The president of the United States is someone who isn't afraid of being called an intellectual and who worked at and lived near a top university for years. His late mother was an anthropologist. He likes to talk to experts.
>
> But the mood in many sessions here at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association was one of just a bit of hurt and disappointment. With a few exceptions, sociologists aren't getting called by the White House—and if many imagined that calls from Washington in the last administration might land them in Guantanamo Bay, this time around, they want to be called.

Donald Tomaskovic-Devey, a sociologist from UMass Amherst, was frustrated that Obama didn't appoint any prominent sociologists to his administration. Obama's election had brought "a sense of possibility," Tomaskovic-Devey said, but "as a sociologist I was pissed off." Jerry Jacobs, a sociologist at the University of Pennsylvania, concurred. "It's not that the president is short of advice," he explained, "but there is a lack of legitimized and organized social science at the highest levels of policy formation." The University of Delaware's Maggie Anderson was similarly disillusioned, saying that the administration's discussion of the economy takes place "as if the economy were race, class and gender neutral."

Mind you, the sociologists don't blame Obama for any of this. They blame the economists, who they claim are disproportionately represented in the administration. Surveying the economists granted entrée into the White House, Tomaskovic-Devey griped, "I have economist envy on a good day and worse things on a bad day."

Jacobs grumbled that "the right economists are still not as good as the right sociologists." We'll take his word for that. ♦

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Casual

The Fan

Robert Novak was a world-famous columnist when I met him in 1974. I was a reporter for the *Evening Star* newspaper in Washington. We were covering a trip to Delaware by Vice President Gerald Ford, who was a few months away from succeeding Richard Nixon as president. The Watergate scandal was raging, the press corps was obsessed with nailing Nixon, and all of Washington was in an uproar. Bob and I spent the day talking about basketball.

Bob, who died on August 18, was unlike most of the bigwigs in journalism. He wasn't a snob. He spent gobs of time with people who didn't know a fraction of what he did about politics and Washington and the world. But if they shared at least one of his many interests, he enjoyed being with them. And basketball, college or pro, was one of his most passionate interests.

I mentioned to Bob I'd seen him at an NBA playoff game of the Washington Bullets (now Wizards). It turned out he was thinking of buying season's tickets for the Bullets. Perhaps we should get our seats together, he said. I was thrilled at the thought. I already had season's tickets—in bad seats. No problem. He'd contact a friend about seats. His friend was Peter O'Malley, himself a close friend of Bullets owner Abe Pollin and a major figure in Maryland politics. For the next 35 years, Bob and I sat beside each other at midcourt. His understanding of basketball was as keen as his knowledge of politics.

The Bullets are a notoriously mediocre team, but there has always been hope. In 1985, that hope was named Karl Malone, a power forward from Louisiana Tech nicknamed the Mailman because he had a part-time job delivering mail. The Bullets had the 12th pick in the NBA draft, which gave them a shot at acquiring Malone.

Bob and I went to the Capital Centre, where the Bullets played then, on draft day. The team had invited season ticket holders to a party. When the 12th pick arrived, Bob began to yell, "Take the Mailman, take the Mailman, take the Mailman," at the top of his lungs. I yelled too. The crowd joined in.

DARREN GYGI

The Bullets took Kenny Green, a forward from Wake Forest. Green was a flop. The last I heard of him, he was playing for the Istanbul team in the Turkish league. The Utah Jazz had the next pick and took Malone. He retired in 2004 after a career as one of the greatest players in the history of basketball.

And so it went. Bob and I had the rare pleasure of watching a historic performance by Leonard Gray, who briefly played for the Bullets. He entered a game in the fourth quarter and fouled out (6 fouls) well before the game had ended. The Bullets lost. We saw Michael Jordan play for the Bullets—after his skills had begun to fade. We watched the Bullets tie a game with 6 points in the final 10 seconds, only to lose by 3 at the buzzer.

Bob got greater satisfaction from following the University of Maryland basketball team. He went to the University of Illinois. In the late 1960s, he took his father to a Maryland game decided in the last seconds and was hooked. He was spotted by members of the Terrapin Club, the boosters club, and asked to join. He did and many of the boosters became Bob's close friends.

Like most Maryland fans, Bob hated the sanctimonious Dean Smith and the team he coached, the University of North Carolina. If UNC played the Soviet Union's team, Bob insisted he'd root for the Soviets. Indeed he would have. He wasn't crazy about Duke either. And he cheered during a game with the University of Virginia, where I went, when the announcer said a Mercedes with Virginia tags was being towed away. I was sitting next to him.

For years, Bob would invite Maryland players from out of town to his home for Thanksgiving. "It was the greatest thing for me," Bob's son Alex told me. "My grandmother thought it was weird." He also took on players as summer interns.

As great as his journalistic achievements (and a lot more fun) was Bob's attendance at every Maryland game, home and away, in the 2001-02 season, when Maryland won the national championship. He traveled to games on his own and arranged with Coach Gary Williams to fly home on the team plane.

Williams and Lefty Driesell, who arrived as Maryland coach soon after Bob adopted the team, came to his funeral. Bob appreciated their ability and liked both of them enormously. It was the politicians he wrote about who aroused his skepticism. He said he could never trust a politician who wasn't a sports fan. And he never did.

Fred Barnes

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A Dog's Breakfast

I have read one apologist after another concerning Michael Vick, et al and their problems with the law, and what Christopher Caldwell misses in his article, "The Misuse of Remorse" (Aug. 10) is that Vick is now a felon. Should felons be allowed to play in professional sports at all? My answer is most emphatically no! There is an aura of near worship around professional athletes that I personally do not approve of, but as it is so, the athletes should be held to a higher standard of conduct. If they disregard the law, as they frequently do, one of the penalties, if convicted, should be to be banned from the world of professional sports from high school on. Athletes are often/always given advantages and privileges other students don't have; there should be responsibilities connected with those privileges and subsequent harsh penalties for transgression. It is high time we stop allowing athletes to get away with crime and then go on as if nothing had happened. This is a bad lesson to be sending into our already stressed culture.

Robert Peterson
Mathews, Va.

Christopher Caldwell's statements are wrong for so many reasons and are typical of the "I'm all right, you're all right" philosophy of the '60s.

The wanton killing or torture of animals by making them fight has always been rejected by a large portion of society. It is similar to pedophilia as the crime is perpetrated on the defenseless innocent and for that reason is not forgiven.

What will happen now to Michael Vick is unclear. But excuses for what he did such as the "homeboy" defense and "he's done the time" do not mean society should accept him back as a member in good standing.

Roy F. Deng Jr.
Delray Beach, Fla.

I am a reader of your publication and enjoy Messrs. Kristol, Barnes, and Hayes on Fox. Thus, I am surprised you'd allow Christopher Caldwell's article about the "misuse of remorse." Michael Vick killed innocent animals. He should have been put away for life!

There are enough important folks who have coined various phrases/sentiments along the lines of "man should be judged on how he treats animals."

"Treating one's fellow humans well is more important"—rubbish and insanity.

Henry B. Turner
Paradise Valley, Ariz.

Leave It to Government

Eli Lehrer's "Insurance Against Terrorism" article (Aug. 10) was one of several excellent pieces, but one of special interest to me. I, along with 30 other chemical manufacturing franchisees across America (and in cooperation with our insurance broker) recently attempted to create a "true reciprocal" system, as referred to in Lehrer's article. We wanted to create a central pool of money that would lessen the blow of the $25,000 deductible in our pollution insurance policy in the unlikely event that one of us experiences such an accident. Seemed reasonable, practical, certainly economical, detrimental to no one—simply a good idea.

But apparently not to the lawyers, the insurance and banking industries, and to our everloving and overly protective government. We soon discovered this common sense plan would violate insurance, banking, and other regulations. To accomplish our simple and mutually beneficial mission would have required more time, effort, and money than was practical for us to invest.

Another good idea quashed by government over regulation.

Clyde L. Hunt Jr.
Greensboro, N.C.

Critically Speaking

I certainly have not read all of Leszek Kolakowski's books, only three, one of which is mentioned in Roger Kimball's article ("Marxism's Main Critic," August 3), and my impressions of his writings are somewhat different.

First let me agree that it was and is enchanting to read his books if for no other reason than his mastery of satire and needling practically every prior or present political, economic, and religious system. For this reason I was left with the conclusion that he was not so much an original philosopher, but rather a reviewer, or as Kimball states, "a critic." He relied heavily on ideas of former thinkers whom he quoted extensively, but it was very difficult for me to get at the root of his own true self. No doubt this was the result of growing up under Marxism where one had to be very careful not to show one's cards, so to speak, for fear of severe punishment. Thus, he is a good example of what Marxism can do to one's mind, if only in one or two generations. He was an atheological thinker or at best an agnostic. Many times during my readings I would want to shout, "Come on, Leszek, spit it out and speak what is in your soul!" But that soul had been damaged by Marxism.

Frank Karwatowicz
Naperville, Ill.

• • •

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Caving to Trial Lawyers

We've always suspected that fear of angering trial lawyers was the only reason President Obama refused to embrace tort reform as a crucial part of achieving his goal of reduced health care costs. Now we know for sure. A moment of candor by Howard Dean, the former chairman of the DNC and an enthusiastic backer of Obama's health reform initiative, confirmed our suspicions. "The reason that tort reform is not in the bill is because the people who wrote it did not want to take on the trial lawyers in addition to everyone else they were taking on," Dean said at a town hall meeting in Virginia last week.

So much for Obama's insistence that cutting costs is dear to his heart. He's rejected, for purely political reasons, one of the most effective tools for containing medical costs. It would upset a special interest group—well-heeled plaintiff's lawyers—that is one of the biggest funders of the Democratic party.

Yet tort reform remains a key to paring costs. The president can make a stab at directly cutting back spending on health care, but that's bound to add to the political unpopularity of Obamacare and is unlikely to pass even an overwhelmingly Democratic Congress. In particular, shrinking Medicare spending is a nonstarter, given the furious opposition of seniors.

Why carry malpractice insurance if you don't malpractice once in a while?

THE NEW YORKER / CARTOONBANK.COM

Tort reform, in contrast, has the advantage of being popular. It would put sensible limits on medical malpractice lawsuits that have flooded the courts and forced doctors to practice "defensive" medicine. Studies of the effects of such medicine put its price tag at a minimum of $100 billion a year and probably more than $200 billion.

In a study last year by the Massachusetts Medical Society, 83 percent of doctors reported they practiced defensive medicine. This is hardly a surprise. Simply to avoid being sued, doctors order more tests, procedures, consultations, referrals to specialists, and hospitalizations than they otherwise would. And why not? Their reaction to lawsuit abuse is perfectly rational.

There are other downsides. Because doctors pay more for malpractice insurance, patients pay more too: nearly $2,000 a year in extra health expenses for an average family, according to the rate of defensive medicine found in a study by Daniel Kessler and Mark McClellan. Stuart Weinstein, the former president of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, has calculated the extra cost of delivering a baby due to high insurance premiums. If a doctor delivers 100 babies a year and pays $200,000 for insurance (the rate in Florida), "$2,000 of the delivery cost for each baby goes to pay the cost of the medical liability premium," he wrote.

Another problem stemming from the surge in malpractice lawsuits is that the doctors most affected—those in obstetrics, neurosurgery, and emergency medicine—leave states with high insurance costs and courts inclined to hand out multimillion-dollar malpractice awards. They migrate to states with limits on lawsuits and lower premiums on malpractice insurance.

Tort reform works. Texas is a good example. In 2003, the state enacted caps on noneconomic damages (so-called pain and suffering) and added a requirement that lawsuits be approved by a panel of medical experts. Over the next four years, premiums fell 21 percent, the drift of doctors out of the state was halted, and 7,000 new doctors set up practices.

It would be nice if every state followed the Texas model. That hasn't happened. But lawsuit abuse and rising health care costs are a national problem. So tort reform is an appropriate part of national health care reform. And a necessary part if there's any hope for curbing costs.

In his speeches, Obama notes that "health care inflation is go[ing] up about twice as fast as regular inflation." That's not quite true. But in any case, medical malpractice premiums are growing at four times the rate of inflation, a whopping 12 percent annually. So why not address them? Republican senator Mike Enzi of Wyoming has proposed health courts to rule on malpractice lawsuits. You can guess the fate of this idea. Obama's Democratic allies in the Senate blocked it, without any protest by the president or his minions.

Howard Dean has exposed the hypocrisy and political favoritism in Obama's health reform scheme. Republicans could be much more vocal in making this part of their critique of Obamacare. In doing so, they would also be pointing out that they have proposed solutions for this key contributor to health care costs—and Obama has not.

—Fred Barnes

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Eric Holder's Anti-CIA Witch Hunt

Second-guessing career prosecutors for political gain.

BY JENNIFER RUBIN

GARY LOCKE

Attorney General Eric Holder's decision to ask a special prosecutor to investigate for possible criminal prosecution CIA operatives who interrogated terrorists in overseas locations is the latest and most egregious instance of political gamesmanship by Holder, who strode into office promising to remove the taint of politicization from the Justice Department.

Jennifer Rubin, a lawyer and regular contributor to Commentary *magazine's Contentions blog, is Pajamas Media's Washington editor.*

Holder's announcement brought a storm of criticism from senators, former CIA director Michael Hayden, former vice president Dick Cheney, and veteran Justice Department attorneys. CIA employees, already reeling from congressional attacks, were understandably mystified by Holder's words assuring them of his "respect and gratitude" and puzzled as to how naming a special prosecutor could evidence a willingness, as Holder put it, "to look forward, and not backward." Holder's puffing to the effect that all who acted in "good faith and within the scope of legal guidance given by the Office of Legal Counsel" should have nothing to fear is belied by the nature of the investigation, which will examine whether agents really *were* acting in good faith and correctly applying the OLC's instructions on interrogation.

Holder pronounced himself obligated to "follow the facts and the law." One critical fact, however, he entirely ignored: Professional prosecutors had already examined the allegations of CIA misconduct, conducted an inquiry, and made a determination—not to prosecute. (One contractor outside the interrogation program was prosecuted for assault.) Holder never mentioned that a task force (informally dubbed the "Detainee Abuse Task Force") in the Eastern District of Virginia has already considered all of the applicable information, including the CIA inspector general's 2004 report made public last week. Following standard procedure, the task force drafted "declination memos" setting forth the rationale for not proceeding with prosecutions.

Those reasons were summed up in a letter from Principal Assistant Deputy Attorney General Brian Benczkowski to Senator Richard Durbin dated February 7, 2008. In each case, Benczkowski wrote, the decision rested on "one or more of the following reasons: insufficient evidence of criminal conduct, insufficient evidence of the subject's involvement, insufficient evidence of criminal intent, and low probability of conviction."

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The federal prosecutors involved in reviewing alleged CIA misconduct were seasoned professionals who would not have hesitated to go public if political appointees had influenced their decision-making, according to multiple former Justice attorneys.

A former Justice Department lawyer says of one of them, U.S. Attorney Chuck Rosenberg, "[He] is a complete professional. Had he perceived any political pressure whatsoever not to prosecute these cases, he would have gone public with it, much like Jim Comey did." (Deputy Attorney General James B. Comey made headlines in 2004 when he refused to buckle to perceived White House pressure while then attorney general John Ashcroft was incapacitated.) Any suggestion that the task force was pressured is "completely false," according to another attorney familiar with its work.

A former Justice Department official describes the Eastern District task force's process:

> The CIA discovers misconduct, which the CIA inspector general investigates. The information seems to suggest misconduct. They go to DOJ. DOJ tells them to stop and that [Justice] will now look at the issue, gather evidence, and investigate it themselves. They must decide if there is a reasonable belief that they could obtain a conviction beyond a reasonable doubt. They looked at it. They made a decision and declined [to prosecute]. They go back to the CIA, which can, and in several instances did, review the matters for internal discipline.

Another individual with direct knowledge of the career prosecutors' work explains that while some of the allegations in the CIA inspector general's report seem startling, "the evidence was very weak." He continues, "A detainee said X but there was no proof to support it."

Declination memos of the type drafted in these cases, according to former Justice Department officials, are considered the "crown jewels" of the department, which strenuously resists releasing them. (Decisions not to prosecute are rarely the subject of public comment, given the risk of tainting suspects' reputations or impairing other investigations.) If the decisions not to prosecute were reversed, however, and a new process launched retracing the work of the task force, the CIA defendants would certainly demand all of the information that served as the basis for the government's original declinations. If the government had information concerning problematic witnesses, defendants' lack of knowledge of applicable interrogation guidelines, or other reasons not to prosecute, this material would be essential to the defense—and likely fatal to the prosecution's case.

A former Justice Department lawyer explains that any new prosecution would likely face "an insurmountable problem." A respected career prosecutor like Durham would find it "very difficult not to reach the same conclusion" unless new facts had emerged.

Another individual with direct knowledge of the career prosecutors' work explains that while some of the allegations in the CIA report seem startling, 'the evidence was very weak.'

Holder, however, mentioned no new evidence. He did cite an investigation by the Justice Department's Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR), but persons familiar with the final report generated by that investigation believe it contains no new material that would explain a decision to reverse the Eastern District task force. Holder, moreover, gave no indication he had reviewed the task force's findings or interviewed its career prosecutors. He is acting as if no decision were ever made to forgo prosecution.

Another obstacle to successful prosecution is the difficulty of obtaining convictions under the torture statute (presumably Holder's basis for potential prosecution). Prosecutors must prove the defendant's specific intent to commit torture, defined as the infliction of "severe physical or mental pain or suffering." Many of the allegations in the CIA inspector general's report, such as blowing smoke in the face of a terror suspect, scratching the suspect's leg with a brush, or forcing him to sit or kneel in an uncomfortable position, do not appear to meet that standard.

The CIA inspector general's report itself suggests serious factual impediments to prosecution. Paragraph 90, for instance, concludes that with regard to a list of interrogation techniques not specifically approved by OLC attorneys,

> For all the instances, the allegations were disputed or too ambiguous to reach any authoritative determination regarding the facts. Thus, although these allegations are illustrative of the nature of the concerns held by individuals with the [Counterterrorist Center] Program and the need for clear guidance, they did not warrant separate investigations or administrative action.

The attorney general's decision to reopen the possibility of CIA prosecutions is eerily reminiscent of his handling of an earlier incident when, having received a legal opinion he did not like from his Office of Legal Counsel, he sought a second opinion elsewhere. After OLC informed Holder that a bill granting the District of Columbia voting rights would be unconstitutional, he went to the solicitor general, reframed the question, and seized upon the more congenial answer.

One former Justice Department lawyer says the CIA matter "has the whiff of the D.C. voting rights issue. You don't like the answer you got from the right place in the bureaucracy so you shop it around. You find someone else to give you the answer you wanted and you latch on to that, regardless of whether the source of that answer is the appropriate source."

Holder's use, meanwhile, of the Office of Professional Responsibility to justify his do-over investi-

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gation is curious. Unlike the Eastern District's career prosecutors, OPR has no expertise or mandate to investigate the CIA. The "professional responsibility" in OPR's title is *lawyers'* professional responsibility. The office's job is to investigate whether Justice Department attorneys have engaged in conduct violating their ethical obligations. (This is why it fell to OPR to investigate whether Office of Legal Counsel lawyers had committed misconduct in crafting the interrogation memos.) There is no precedent for OPR's investigating whether nonlawyer CIA agents failed to follow legal advice or broke criminal statutes. One former Justice Department official says, "This is totally outside their lane."

Another veteran lawyer says bluntly that it has "never happened, never," that OPR has been set loose to second guess career prosecutors' judgment, let alone go roving outside of the department to explore criminal charges against another agency's employees. He explains that in essence OPR—without saying it—is claiming that the Eastern District task force career lawyers committed "prosecutorial misconduct." He asks: "What are they going to do—prosecute them too? Refer them to the bar? And if not, if [the task force only exercised] prosecutorial discretion, then the whole thing is political."

An official with direct knowledge of the events explained that when OPR presented its draft report to outgoing Attorney General Michael Mukasey and his deputy, Mark Filip, at the end of the Bush administration, both questioned what a recommendation to investigate the CIA was doing in a report assessing OLC lawyers' professional responsibilities. The potential prosecution of CIA agents was not the focus of the OPR draft, of course, for the obvious reason that OPR's purview did not encompass complex national security issues or CIA agents' potential criminal conduct.

It remains unclear how OPR was tapped to delve into CIA conduct. Former Justice Department attorneys from various divisions express open contempt for the group's quality of lawyering and lack of prosecutorial experience. One says that it is "ludicrous" for OPR attorneys—many with no prosecutorial experience in terrorism (or any) cases—to second guess career prosecutors expert in this area: "It is like having a medical school dropout review the work of a surgeon."

Some point to politics within the Justice Department predating the Obama administration. The department's inspector general has long sought to bring OPR under his ambit, and OPR has historically smarted under the perception that it is not a full-fledged investigative organization. Playing the central role in a high-profile inquiry would demonstrate OPR's muscle and keep the inspector general at bay. Indeed, OPR's former head boasted to Justice officials that his group was following the model of the high-profile investigation by the department's inspector general of the Bush administration's firing of nine U.S. attorneys in 2006. OPR, eager to demonstrate its investigative chops, would be the perfect instrument for an attorney general bent on revisiting the prior administration's work.

Considering the problematic nature of a do-over, former Justice Department attorneys express astonishment at Holder's move. Many believe it is another bone thrown to the president's leftwing base.

Considering the problematic nature of a do-over prosecution, former Justice Department attorneys express astonishment at Holder's move. Many believe it is another bone thrown to the president's leftwing base, one more shot at the Bush administration. Since the special prosecutor, John Durham, is held in high esteem—and almost certainly won't be able to come up with cases provable beyond a reasonable doubt—some speculate that Holder is stalling.

Durham, they reason, will revisit the task force's work, investigate the allegations, and report back that convictions are not obtainable. Holder will have bought the indulgence of the left and some time for the president. This gambit, however, would only postpone the inevitable. The netroots and liberal lawmakers will be satisfied with nothing short of prosecution.

By appointing Durham, Holder may have succeeded only in enraging conservatives and dangerously raising liberals' expectations. But if this special prosecutor takes as long to conduct his review as some have in the past, Holder may move on before Durham finishes his work. Still stinging from criticism of his involvement in the pardon of international fugitive Marc Rich on the final day of the Clinton administration and the revelation that he authorized Clinton-era renditions, Holder will have burnished his image as an "independent" attorney general.

The "outrage," as one former Justice Department lawyer explains, is that although virtually no professional prosecutor believes there will ever be a conviction, the implicated CIA operatives will "have to hire lawyers to defend themselves." Holder appears to have shied away from going to war with veteran Justice Department attorneys over controversial prosecutions of OLC lawyers—but redirected eager OPR attorneys against low level CIA operatives.

Aside from the chilling effect on the CIA and the impropriety of dragging individuals through investigations with virtually no chance for convictions, reversing a prosecutorial decision of a prior administration is a dangerous precedent for the Justice Department. One former Justice lawyer warns: "It would mean no one would ever get any peace, because if you were the target of an investigation at the end of which DOJ said it was not prosecuting, there would be no finality to that decision. It would turn DOJ into a purely partisan agency."

And that is what the Holder Justice Department has become. ♦

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Fair Is Foul in Scotland

The feckless release of a Libyan terrorist.

BY TOD LINDBERG

Since there is so little of it, let's start with the good news about the release from prison and triumphant return to Libya of Abdelbaset Ali al-Megrahi, the terrorist who was supposedly serving a life sentence in a Scottish prison for his role in blowing Pan Am 103 out of the sky over Lockerbie in 1988, killing 270 people.

The good news is that many Scots, including members of parliament, were genuinely outraged by the decision of Scotland's cabinet secretary for justice, Kenny MacAskill, to grant "compassionate release" to Megrahi, who has cancer. The same is true of Brits in general. The local press in Edinburgh and London has been chock-full of denunciation of the move and speculation about who knew and said what and when, as well as what the real motive might have been. It looks like there's an excellent chance MacAskill's political career is over, and if Gordon Brown needed another nail in the coffin of his effort to remain Britain's prime minister past next June, this was one. Two cheers for righteous indignation.

The bad news, however, is the sheer amount of dysfunctionality the spectacle has put on display. It really does not bode well for those Americans, presumably including the Obama administration, who seek a stronger European partner for coping with the troubles of the wider world—let alone for aficionados of the "special relationship."

The basic outline of the story begins with Megrahi's October 2008 diagnosis with advanced prostate cancer. Under Scotland's limited self-government authority, the decision on whether to grant him early release from prison on compassionate grounds was MacAskill's. With Megrahi supposedly having three months left to live, Scottish authorities consulted the Brown government on the matter, which affirmed that the decision was Scotland's to make. MacAskill, pronouncing himself "bound by Scottish values to release him," sprung Megrahi on August 20. Police escorted him to a chartered jet to take him to Tripoli. Libyan strongman Muammar Qaddafi's son, Saif al-Islam al-Qaddafi, who owns a $16 million mansion in a London suburb, accompanied Megrahi to Tripoli, where a cheering crowd at the airport, many waving Scottish flags, greeted him as a returning hero. He was reunited on the airplane steps with his acquitted codefendant in the bombing.

> Apparently nobody could understand that releasing Megrahi, let alone letting him go home to Libya, let alone to receive a well-publicized hero's welcome, was really a foreign policy question.

There is indeed a question of basic values here. "Scottish values" may favor compassionate release for prisoners on their death-beds; Americans don't seem especially troubled about letting convicts die in jail. A January 2007 Bureau of Justice Statistics study notes that 12,129 inmates died in state prisons from 2001 until 2004, more than 92 percent of natural causes (6 percent were suicides and 2 percent homicides). Official European opposition to the death penalty is well known. Less well known is the European Union opposition to life sentences without parole. U.S. jurisdictions do have some provisions for compassionate release, but—and this may be a key point—they tend not to apply to convicted international terrorists who have killed hundreds of innocent people (Megrahi's victims included 189 Americans).

Then there are the less savory allegations surrounding Megrahi's release. Springing Megrahi was a *cause célèbre* for the Arab League, which maintains he is innocent. It was also a longtime project of Qaddafi's wheeler-dealer son in London. Saif himself claimed that Megrahi's release was always an issue in negotiations over business deals. Lord Trefgarne, the head of the Libyan British Business Council, lamenting the slow pace of oil deals, charmingly noted, "Perhaps now, with the final resolution of the Lockerbie affair, as far as the Libyans are concerned, maybe they'll move a bit more swiftly." Colonel Qaddafi, having flamboyantly thanked the queen, Prince Andrew, "my friend Brown," and the Scottish authorities, promised, "This step . . . will be positively reflected in all fields of cooperation between the two countries."

Even if there was no explicit quid pro quo, future deals consummated between British firms and the Libyan government will be seen in light of their down payment, Megrahi's release. And while Lord Trefgarne may be right that Lockerbie is over and done with "as far as the Libyans are concerned," it certainly is not for the families of the victims. FBI director Robert Mueller, who was assistant attorney general in charge of the Megrahi investigation in 1991, wrote a scorching letter to MacAskill: "Your action in releasing Megrahi is as inexplicable as it is detrimental to the cause of justice. Indeed your action makes a mockery of the rule of law" and "a mockery of the emotions, passions and pathos of all those affected by the Lockerbie tragedy" and

Tod Lindberg, a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard, *is a fellow at the Hoover Institution and editor of* Policy Review.

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"a mockery of the grief of the families."

So perhaps we just disagree with some of our European friends over matters like compassionate release for international terrorists and the price of "cooperation" to get business deals done. The dysfunction enters elsewhere: namely, that apparently nobody could understand that releasing Megrahi, let alone letting him go home to Libya, let alone to receive a well-publicized hero's welcome, was really a *foreign policy* question, and one with the potential for causing a huge disruption internationally, as it has.

The pretense, shared by the Scottish home-rule authorities and the Brown government, was that this whole affair was about whether Scotland's justice secretary was persuaded that a prisoner in his custody would shortly die and should be released. (Questions have been raised about the three-months-to-live claim, as it happens; Megrahi was not exactly on his deathbed when he arrived triumphant in Tripoli.) But that's not what this was about. The Brown government should have seen as much and asserted itself. London still has responsibility for U.K. foreign policy; Scotland doesn't get to have its own. The principle of subsidiarity became a convenient excuse to do nothing.

This is a broader problem for Europe with the emergence of a model of "pooled sovereignty" involving the European Union, national governments, local jurisdictions, and semi-autonomous regions that set policy on their own. When a minor local official has final say over the release of a world-class terrorist, something has gone badly wrong. The intervention of the Brown government with Libya only to ask that Megrahi not receive a celebratory welcome was just pathetic: The problem was not the ceremony; it was the release.

The U.K. in the case of Scotland and the EU more generally in relation to national governments are in danger of creating an environment in which no one is really in charge of thinking about the international implications of local decisions. That's the path to fecklessness on a continental scale. ♦

The 'Most Prolific' Detainee

We learned a lot about al Qaeda from KSM, and not by asking nicely. BY THOMAS JOSCELYN

On March 1, 2003, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM), the principal planner of the September 11 attacks, was captured in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. U.S. interrogators quickly went about the business of getting him to talk, and for good reasons. KSM's operatives were already here, inside America, planning attacks.

Shortly after KSM was detained, an Ohio-based truck driver named Iyman Faris was arrested by the FBI. Faris had reportedly been under suspicion beforehand, but U.S. authorities suddenly determined that they had to arrest him. It turned out that Faris, an al Qaeda-trained sleeper agent, had been dispatched to the United States by KSM to plot attacks on landmarks in the New York area, including the Brooklyn Bridge.

Uzair Paracha

Then, in late March, a young Pakistani man named Uzair Paracha was arrested. He had been working out of an office in Manhattan's Garment District for a company owned by his father, Saifullah Paracha. KSM wanted Uzair to facilitate the entry of al Qaeda operatives and use the Parachas' import-export business to smuggle explosives into the United States.

Until this past week, it was not clear how U.S. authorities pieced together the details of this plotting so soon after KSM was captured. But the inspector general's report on the CIA's detainee interrogation program and two other CIA analytical papers—all three of which were released on August 24—fill in the blanks. It is clear now, if it wasn't before, that the CIA's questioning of KSM saved numerous lives, both here and abroad. The inspector general found that KSM "provided information that helped lead to the arrests of terrorists including Saifullah Paracha and his son Uzair Paracha, businessmen whom [KSM] planned to use to smuggle explosives into the United States." His "information also led to the investigation and prosecution of Iyman Faris." KSM would become the "most prolific" detainee in the CIA's custody, giving up fellow terrorists and the details of plots around the globe.

The mainstream media and the left are heavily invested in the notion that the CIA's enhanced interrogation program was not only immoral and illegal, but also of dubious efficacy. It has long been assumed that the harshest interrogation techniques, including waterboarding, were at best poor interrogation tradecraft. The inspector general's report, which was written as an indictment of these practices, not as a defense, challenges that received wisdom.

In particular, the inspector general found that KSM was "an accomplished resistor" who "provided only a few intelligence reports prior to the use of the waterboard," and much of his information was "outdated, inaccurate, or incomplete." KSM did talk about al Qaeda's desire to strike Heathrow Airport in London. But, as the CIA noted, KSM had good reason to believe that the Heathrow plot had already been compromised.

Thomas Joscelyn is a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

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In September 2002, KSM's co-conspirator, Ramzi Binalshibh, had been arrested in Pakistan. Binalshibh was the point man for the Heathrow plot, just as he was for the September 11 operation. Press accounts written shortly after Binalshibh's capture, and prior to KSM's, noted that Binalshibh was cooperating with authorities and had told them about al Qaeda's desire to hijack a plane to use in an attack on Heathrow. So KSM would have thought he was not giving up much, if anything, by discussing the Heathrow plot. Even so, the CIA found that KSM was concealing certain aspects of the Heathrow plot from his interrogators.

Soon, however, KSM became the CIA's most-important source of information. He provided details of al Qaeda's history, including aborted or stalled plots, and important context for understanding of how the terror network operated. The agency filled in many of the gaps in its knowledge in this regard. But Langley's men were primarily interested in stopping the next attack and saving lives, and in that regard the interrogations were an unequivocal success.

In its July 13, 2004, analysis titled "Khalid Shaykh Muhammad: Preeminent Source on Al-Qa'ida," the CIA concluded (emphasis added):

> It will take years to determine definitively all the plots in which KSM was involved and of which he was aware, but our extensive debriefings of various KSM lieutenants since early 2003 suggest that *he has divulged at least the broad outlines of his network's most significant plots against the United States and elsewhere* in his role as al Qaeda's chief of operations outside of Afghanistan.

The Parachas and Faris were not the only terrorists KSM gave up. Majid Khan was arrested just a few days after KSM in Pakistan. During questioning, KSM said that Khan had given $50,000 to the associates of an al Qaeda operative named Hambali in Southeast Asia. Khan was questioned about KSM's admission and revealed that he had given the money to a man named Zubair. Khan described Zubair's physical appearance and gave interrogators his contact number. "Based on that information," the CIA's analysts noted, "Zubair was captured in June 2003."

Zubair then gave his interrogators information about another Hambali associate named Lillie. Both Lillie and Zubair were at one point slated to take part in a suicide hijacking attack on America's West Coast. Lillie was captured and then, in turn, provided information that led to the arrest of Hambali in August 2003. Within a few short months, KSM's admission led to an entire network of al Qaeda operatives being arrested—the story was laid out in detail by the CIA in a 2005 report titled "Detainee Reporting Pivotal for the War Against Al Qaeda." The importance of Hambali's arrest cannot be overstated. He was the chief of Jemaah Islamiyah, an al Qaeda affiliate that was at the heart of the terror network's plotting against the United States. He was also the mastermind of the October 2002 Bali bombings, which killed 202 people and wounded 240 more, as well as several other lethal attacks.

Ramzi Binalshibh

Yazid Sufaat

After Hambali was arrested, KSM identified Hambali's brother, 'Abd al-Hadi (aka "Gun Gun Rusman Gunawan"), as his likely successor. During debriefings, Hambali "unwittingly" gave up information that let authorities pinpoint his brother's whereabouts. Gun Gun was arrested in short order, and, in September 2003, Gun Gun told authorities that his brother, Hambali, had dispatched a cell of operatives to Karachi for further training. Fourteen of the cell's members were quickly located and arrested. According to the CIA's analysis, Hambali told authorities that he "was grooming members of the cell for U.S. operations—at the behest of KSM—probably as part of KSM's plot to fly hijacked planes into the tallest building on the US West Coast."

That's not all that is detailed in the CIA reports. Several months prior to KSM's capture, Malaysian authorities arrested an al Qaeda agent named Yazid Sufaat. At the time, authorities did not know the full scope of Sufaat's role in al Qaeda. According to the CIA, however, KSM wrongly deduced that his adversaries already knew that Sufaat was al Qaeda's chief anthrax scientist and unwittingly divulged details about al Qaeda's anthrax program, including that there were three individuals responsible for running it. When confronted with this intelligence, Sufaat gave authorities "fragmentary" information about his two associates, "[b]ut it was ultimately the information provided by KSM that led to the capture of Yazid's two principal assistants in the anthrax program," the CIA concluded.

With the release of the inspector general's report and other supporting documents, the American media have seized upon every hint of rough treatment. That KSM was subjected to "183 applications of the waterboard in March 2003," for example, has been repeated over and over again. (The number of applications refers to the number of times water was actually poured on KSM's face.) The fact that KSM gave up intelligence that led to the arrests of al Qaeda operatives that same month, while they were plotting attacks on American soil, has received far less attention. That KSM's interrogations led to the arrest of more than a dozen other al Qaeda operatives slated to take part in future attacks within just a few short months of his capture has also received scant notice.

The media and the left would have us focus only on the waterboarding. But the declassified documents tell a story that is hard to square with the notion that waterboarding is ineffective. Before being waterboarded, KSM offered up little. Afterwards, he became the CIA's "preeminent source" on al Qaeda. Just what made him talk? ♦

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Might Makes Right

Yale University Press blinks.

BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

During the "cartoon crisis" of early 2006—when mobs in Nigeria, Pakistan, Libya, the Palestinian territories, and elsewhere attacked embassies, looted buildings, and murdered bystanders to protest the publication of caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad in the Danish daily *Jyllands-Posten*—Jytte Klausen, a Danish-born social scientist and a professor at Brandeis, was less sympathetic to the newspaper than most observers. "This all would have been very well," she wrote in *Salon*, "if the paper had a long tradition of standing up for fearless artistic expression. But it so happens that three years ago, *Jyllands-Posten* refused to publish cartoons portraying Jesus, on the grounds that they would offend readers."

Klausen has done serious scholarly work on the attitudes of Europe's Muslim elites. But she was wrong about this. Just because *Jyllands-Posten* was not neutral in its attitudes towards the world's religions did not deprive it of its right to say what it wanted. Freedom of speech means freedom of speech. It does not mean freedom to be neutral or freedom to be constructive. Even totalitarian societies have *that* kind of freedom of speech.

And that kind of freedom of speech has now claimed Klausen herself as a victim. Her account of the cartoon crisis is due to be published by Yale University Press (YUP) this fall. It is the product of years of work, and it was supposed to be illustrated. But in July, the press's director, John Donatich; the chair of Yale's Council on Mideast Studies, Marcia Inhorn; and the secretary of the Yale Corporation, Linda Lorimer, all traveled to Boston to let Klausen know that they had consulted a group of experts about her book. It included the Nigerian politician Ibrahim Gambari and former U.S. ambassador to the U.N. John Negroponte. (It is a mystery what these people, none of whom read the book, are supposed to be experts *in*.) The panel warned of violence if the press published the cartoons and counseled against including them.

In fact, they counseled taking out all pictures of Mohammed, including an etching done by the French artist Gustave Doré in the 19th century. This is perhaps the most unfortunate aspect of the incident. According to YUP's catalogue description of the book (the press would not send THE WEEKLY STANDARD a copy this week), Klausen's thesis is that the cartoon riots were not a "spontaneous" outburst of religious anger. They were orchestrated by extremists to serve particular political ends in Denmark and in the Muslim world. This reading makes sense. But, by not publishing the Doré caricature, Yale leaves the impression that it is Muslims' religious sensibilities, and not extremists' political ones that are at the root of its self-muzzling.

Of course, an illustrated history of the cartoon crisis which does not include the Danish cartoons themselves is something of a joke. There are lots of important historic episodes in which offensive graphics play a big role. Academic studies of the anti-Semitic Nazi newspaper *Der Stürmer* or of the Ku Klux Klan have published, for illustrative purposes, material that is as offensive as offensive can be. *Jyllands-Posten*'s provocation was not in the same league. It was an experiment in free speech, not an exercise in hatred. Klausen's book, moreover, reproduced only a shot of the spread with the caricatures on it, not the caricatures themselves.

Cary Nelson, the president of the American Association of University Professors, issued a statement in which he described YUP's position as: "We do not negotiate with terrorists. We just accede to their anticipated demands." YUP is not the first institution to do so. The Berlin Opera three years ago canceled a production of Mozart's *Idomeneo* that included decapitated heads of Muhammad, Jesus, and Buddha.

But was this the whole story? Some of the most probing reporting on the matter has been done by the Islamologist and blogger Martin Kramer, whose short book *Ivory Towers on Sand* (2001) detailed how large gifts from Saudi Arabia and other oil magnates have eroded academic standards in the Middle Eastern studies departments of American universities. He suggests that fear of violence may not have been the real reason for Yale's demurral. The prospect of a gift from the Saudi decabillionaire Prince Alwaleed bin Talal, who has doled out tens of millions to set up sympathetic Islamic Studies centers at select universities, may have played a role. Kramer notes that Muna AbuSulayman, the executive director of Alwaleed's foundation and responsible for setting up mammoth donations to Harvard and Georgetown, will shortly be moving to New Haven, having been named by the university as a "Yale World Fellow."

The Yale editors declare themselves willing to be offensive, as if *that* were the heart of free speech, but unwilling to risk violence, as if that were a totally separate question which has nothing to do with free speech at all. There was a touching lameness to the explanations Donatich gave the *New York Times*. He had "never blinked," he said, when it came to publishing controversial books and gave as an example a "recent unauthorized biography of Thailand's current monarch." The message is that if you are offended and threaten violence, we'll obey you. But if, like the Thai royal family, you are offended and *don't* threaten violence . . . Well, there is another way of putting it. Might makes right. ♦

Christopher Caldwell, a senior editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD, *is the author of* Reflections on the Revolution in Europe: Immigration, Islam, and the West.

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A Rake's Progress

By Matt Labash

PHOTOGRAPHS BY TOM WOLFF

Let me live in a house by the side of the road,
Where the race of men go by;
The men who are good and the men who are bad,
As good and as bad as I.

—from Sam Walter Foss's 'House by the Side of the Road,' the first poem Marion Barry recited in church as a boy

In most conceptions of Washington, D.C., the city operates on Eastern Standard Time. But those who pass through Marion Barry's orbit know there's another zone which has nothing to do with the mean solar time of the 75th meridian west of the Greenwich Observatory. It's called "Barry Time." The former four-term mayor of D.C. will show up for speeches, meetings, and civic events whenever he damn well pleases.

This translates into many minutes, even hours, of waiting for Barry to appear. So after being slated to hang out with Barry for several days, I am surprised to receive a call from his spokesperson, Natalie Williams, two days before we're supposed to meet.

"Mr. Barry wants to start early," Natalie informs. "He wants you to come to church with him tomorrow."

"Great," I say. "What time does church start?"

"Eleven A.M.," she says.

"Okay. And what time should I meet him before church?" I ask.

"Eleven-thirty," she responds with complete seriousness.

Barry, now in his second postmayoral term as a councilman representing the city's poorest ward, is these days something less than a political powerhouse, but my interest had recently been rekindled in the man universally known as one of the two or three finest crack-smoking politicians our nation has ever produced. A 1990 FBI sting yielded grainy video of Barry holding a crack pipe to his lips that was broadcast around the world (launching a booming "Bitch-set-me-up" T-shirt industry), and his name became a late-night comic's rim shot, especially as he won one more mayoral term in 1994 after serving six months in jail.

Now, after a relatively dormant postmayoral period of local politicking, serial brushes with the law, health and

Matt Labash is a senior writer at The Weekly Standard.

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Most jarring is the end table littered with prescriptions—13 bottles in all—and syringes. It looks like Elvis's medicine cabinet, circa 1977. At first I think maybe I have the wrong day and have walked into a Vista Hotel-scene redux (the location of his 1990 crack bust). But I'm looking instead at all the meds he takes after a February kidney transplant.

taxman problems, with the occasional drug relapse, Barry seemed to be enjoying a renaissance for both good and bad reasons. The good, for him, has come in the form of a balanced, years-in-the-making documentary called *The Nine Lives of Marion Barry*, now in regular rotation on HBO. It traces Barry's arc from an idealistic, dashiki-wearing civil rights activist, through his rise and fall as mayor, to his current redemptive plateau-period, a life which has made him the singular figure in the history of D.C.'s municipal politics.

The bad came this past 4th of July weekend, when Barry was arrested for "stalking" his former girlfriend, Donna Watts-Brighthaupt, after an argument they'd had on the way to Rehoboth Beach. She changed her mind about the trip and returned to D.C., flagging down an officer when Barry was allegedly pursuing her in his car. The stalking charge looked like an honest lover's tiff, amounted to nothing, and was quickly dropped.

In typical Barry fashion, however, there were baroque touches that gave the story national oxygen. For instance, the Barry team called a late-night press conference to denounce Watts's psychiatric fitness, and she showed up in the middle of it, loudly denouncing their denunciation. Scribes at the Washington *City Paper*, who still enjoy riding Barry like the village Zipcar, detailed the knotty love triangle between Barry, Donna, and her ex-husband—whom Barry had had banished from the City Council building—and ran transcripts from leaked voicemail tapes of a lovesick Barry trying to woo Donna back. They did the same with a taped fight in

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So naturally defensive is Barry that when I ask him what pisses him off, he says, 'Some things don't piss me off, some things make me angry.' That's the same thing, I say. 'Nah, nah, there's a difference,' he says. 'You argue about everything!' I tell him. 'I have to!'

which Donna proclaimed that Barry had booted her out of a Denver hotel room "cause I wouldn't suck your dick," a quote that provided likely the most memorable cover-line in *City Paper* history.

Still, this was just the entertainment portion of the program. The real trouble was Watts-Brighthaupt's employment arrangement with Barry, who had (legally) garnered nearly $1 million in earmarks for various nonprofits in his ward—which journalistic Nosy Neds discovered had all sorts of irregularities, such as outfits overseen by Barry's City Council staffers, contracts thrown to women he'd dated (not just Watts-Brighthaupt), people being paid for do-nothing jobs, alleged forgeries, etc.

Nobody's yet alleged Barry personally profited. For all the perceptions of Barry over the years as a dirty politician, he's been a remarkably clean one on the financial front. Having periodically teetered on the edge of personal insolvency, even as two of his deputy mayors went upriver for embezzlement and corruption in the 1980s, Barry has never been caught with his hand in the cookie jar, and not for lack of investigators trying.

Barry has audaciously proclaimed he's done nothing wrong—if you can't throw work to qualified girlfriends with City Council-approved taxpayer money, just who can you throw work to? Barry insists he wouldn't give a job to his mother if she wasn't qualified. Still, as Barry points out, "Old Man Daley gave his son the insurance contract, and was criticized for it. He said, 'If a father can't help his son, what the hell is he here for?'"

The whole messy business has resulted in the City Council authorizing an ethics investigation of Barry by superlawyer Robert Bennett (something of an expert on ethically challenged politicians, having represented Bill Clinton). It has also reportedly piqued the more serious investigative interest of the feds, who've never lacked for zeal in building cases against Barry, having spent tens of millions doing so going all the way back to the FBI's 1967 file on "Marion S. Barry, Jr., Negro Militant."

When I ask a Barry staffer if her boss is spooked by the new attention, she says, "No. He never gets spooked. We get spooked." By the lights of longtime Barry aficionados, this latest doesn't rank very high on his scandal Richter Scale. A ward boss throwing sketchy patronage jobs to friends? It could make a Barry connoisseur very sleepy. Plus, some Barry-watchers think he might be losing a step. There wasn't even any cocaine involved.

Yet the scandal wasn't my reason for visiting hizzoner. Barry-bashing has been a near ubiquitous sport, and approaching him in order to find holes in his stories is about as sporting as taking candy from a quadriplegic preemie. Rather, I was curious to take his measure as a human being, which many forget he still is, despite the caricatures and self-parodies. For 73 years, over 40 of them in public life, Barry has kept rearing up like a plastic varmint in a Whac-a-Mole game. No matter how many times he's batted about the head with a mallet, he relentlessly reappears.

Like countless Maryland commuters, I drive past the turnoff to Marion Barry's house every time I go to the District without ever giving his Congress Heights neighborhood in Southeast Washington a thought. The Suitland Parkway that runs past it doubles as the most common artery from the city to Andrews Air Force Base—Air Force One frequently casts shadows on your car as you drive it. The denizens of Ward 8 commonly refer to their locale as "east of the river"—by which they mean the Anacostia River, an 8.4 mile long, meandering toxic soup which is about as clear as Swiss Miss and where up to 68 percent of the brown bullhead catfish have been found to have liver tumors. Flowing into the much more celebrated Potomac, it's the kind of river most people tend to forget, just as they do the ward that nestles it.

For decades, Ward 8 has been the crime and poverty and every-other-dubious-statistic headquarters of D.C. It is the land that the real estate bubble forgot. Amidst the check-cashing places and screw-top liquor stores, it contains such tourist meccas as the reeking Blue Plains Wastewater Treatment plant and St. Elizabeth's psychiatric hospital, where Ezra Pound sweated out his insanity plea for treason and John Hinckley Jr. can compose rock operas for Jodie Foster in peace. While only minutes from Capitol Hill, and from the more prosperous black suburbs in Maryland's Prince George's County, Ward 8 might as well be in Burkina Faso to the commuting class. The only reason to pull off there is if you needed to buy a quick fifth of Hennessey for the ride home, or possibly something less legal.

It is here, after cruising past street signs bearing the names "Martin Luther King" and "Malcolm X," that I find Barry's house, a rented red-brick duplex. (He lives alone, as Cora Masters Barry, his fourth wife, left him in 2002, without going through the formality of getting a divorce.) The window shades are yellowed and drawn. There is bird splat

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on the bricks. A Metro bus-stop pole is posted right in front of it, meaning Barry sometimes has a chance to involuntarily meet constituents, as some end up waiting for their ride on his barren concrete porch.

I knock on the door—the doorbell's missing—even though I'm a good half hour early. I don't want to make Barry late for being late to church. "Come in!" he yells. And as I do, I find him sitting on the couch, wearing track pants and a loose workout shirt, eating a greasy, four-course IHOP take-out breakfast on a TV tray in front of his big-screen. He looks both gaunter and more appealing than during the glory years, when the drugging and boozing often swelled him up like a sweating, smirking sausage. His skin is smooth—he believes in the healing balm of moisturizer—and the lines on his face make him look more avuncular and settled.

The furniture is no-frills—the dining room table is pushed against the wall, and some chairs still have the plastic on them. There is no vanity wall of past glories. Décor is minimalist, besides the Afro-centric statuary and Barack Obama's beatific mug on a commemorative "From Slavery to the White House" blanket draped over his couch. The coffee table is littered with books of the self-improvement variety: the Bible, M. Scott Peck's *The Road Less Traveled*, Gary Chapman's *The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate*.

Most jarring is the end table littered with prescriptions—13 bottles in all—and syringes. It looks like Elvis's medicine cabinet, circa 1977. At first I think maybe I have the wrong day and have walked into a Vista Hotel-scene redux (the location of his 1990 crack bust). But I'm looking instead at all the meds he takes after a February kidney transplant. The syringes, he explains, are for "taking my sugar," which he has to do as a longtime diabetic. Barry has other health issues, too. He has hypertension. His cancerous prostate is a distant memory, the surgery for which caused some incontinence issues. He keeps a urinal next to his bed for middle-of-the-night emergencies. It's not the most ideal arrangement for a legendary Romeo, but, as he points out, "The alternative is worse."

Barry speaks in a mumbly whisper ("I'll talk louder" he repeatedly promises when I keep checking my tape recorder for pick-up), but seems in fine spirits. He's used to dodging bullets. With varying success, as he reminds me of the time in 1977 when Muslim terrorists took hostages in the District Building when Barry was a councilmember. It was shortly before his first mayoral run, and he caught a bullet in the chest. "Do you have a scar?" I ask. "Let's see," he says, lifting up his shirt, so that within ten minutes of arriving, I'm eyeball to areola with Barry's left nipple. It's a move that's very Barry. Most times, he reveals nothing at all. Then he reveals too much.

After about 30 seconds of examination, we can't decide

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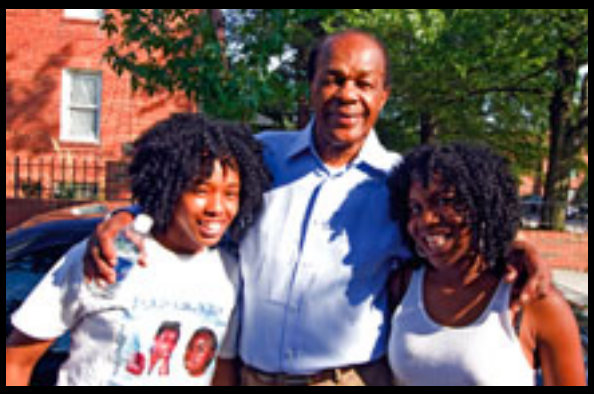

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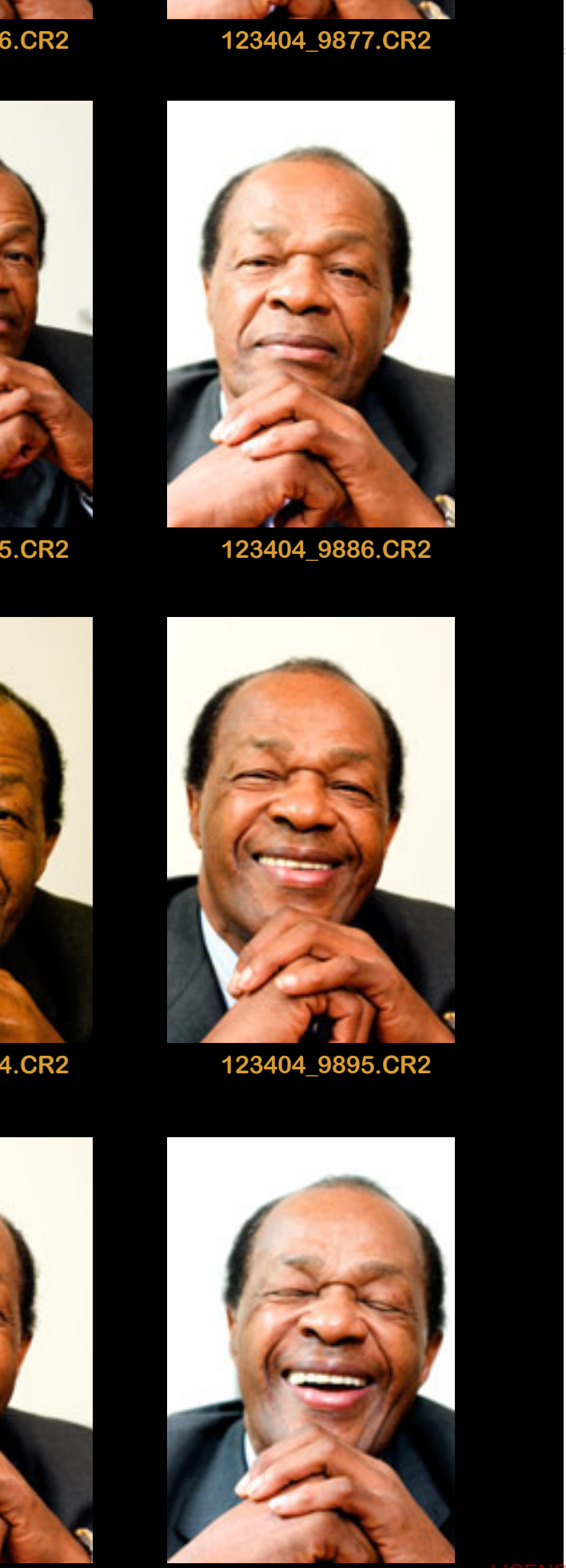

if what we're looking at is a fading gunshot wound or a skin blemish. But for Barry's semi-nakedness, he's still adept at showing less than everything. The point I shouldn't miss, one of the reasons he wants to bring me to church, is that "I go through this time and time again, when if it weren't for God, I wouldn't be here." He catalogs various dramatic happenings in his life: making it out of Mississippi as the son of sharecroppers, near misses during his SNCC-organizer days in the civil rights movement, the Vista Hotel.

I wasn't even going to bring the latter up until our second date, as it's generally bad manners to mention your host's crack bust straightaway. But since he mentions it, I pursue a bit, asking him how he felt when he realized he'd been stung. "I didn't realize what happened," he says. "It happened so fast. And so my instinct was as I said 'This bitch set me up.'"

"She kinda did," I offer, an objectively indisputable point.

"Not kinda—she did!" he reiterates of Rasheeda Moore, the former model and Barry paramour. While Barry admits to using cocaine "recreationally" beforehand (several witnesses at his trial said he "recreated" habitually), he says he had not smoked crack before (also at odds with the testimony of witnesses), claiming he even needed to go to the bathroom to practice holding the pipe, so as not to look like an amateur in front of Moore. In the video, Barry is seen asking her multiple times how to do it and brushing off her initial invites. But, he adds, "Rasheeda could talk an Eskimo into buying a refrigerator."

One of the more underappreciated, pathos-laden aspects of the video is how the main impetus for Barry's being present "was sex," as he freely admits, and he repeatedly grovels to Rasheeda on the video. I mention that I recall him grabbing her breast. "Tried to," he readily agrees. "The manly instincts took over. . . . I guess what was probably in my mind—first time I thought about it—was if I took a hit, maybe she would change her mind about sex."

"So your motives were pure," I note.

His cellphone rings, as it incessantly does, and he answers it. "I'm gettin' ready to go to church, let me call you back." He hangs up, saying, "I'm glad you're interested in all that. Very few people ask me."

Of his own culpability in the matter, Barry's a little less forthright. He says he's thankful to God, as it "could've turned out another way." I point out that the incident and resulting trial turned out pretty badly: serial humiliation, his third wife leaving him, and eventually six months in jail (not, actually, from the Vista incident, but from another misdemeanor possession that was part of the 14-count indictment). "People assume there was crack cocaine in there. The jurors didn't believe it," he says.

Some pro-Barry jurors did speculate that the pipe was

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filled with baking soda. But he at least assumed there was crack in it, I assert. "How do you know?" he asks, now defensive. Well that's what most people assume is in a crack pipe, I proffer, hence the name "crack pipe."

"I don't know," he says, completely straight-faced. "I didn't think about it. . . . Who knows what the FBI put in there? I know this: They tried to kill me. That's for sure."

We are joined for church by a slew of younger women, many roughly half his age, in their Sunday finery. Barry gives off the whiff of a black Hugh Hefner: old enough to seem a fatherly elder that younger women like to mother-hen, lusty enough that you're never sure which of his female relations goes beyond platonic. There's Natalie Williams, his spokesperson, and her friend in from Los Angeles, who is a dead ringer for the actress Robin Givens. There's Chenille Spencer, Barry's sometime companion and personal assistant, and her nine-year-old-son Fats, who is Barry's godson. (Barry has five godsons, as he says it's important for the kids around his ward, often raised by single mothers, to have "positive male role models.")

Barry is often circumspect about who he has seen romantically. Though when I point out to him that he's entitled to see whoever he wants, he agrees: "That's right. I'm free, black, and 21." There is Kim Dickens, though, who Barry admits he "takes out" sometimes and who was kind enough to donate a kidney to Barry after his renal failure. She basically saved his life, but makes no great to-do about it. I ask Kim if she misses her kidney. "I do have separation anxiety," she says. "But I visit him enough. So the kidneys see each other."

There is also a CW network cameraman along for the morning, collecting b-reel for a two-part series on Barry. The star goes upstairs to get suited up, right down to his silver wraparound cufflinks. "A professor told me if you want to be a millionaire, look like a millionaire," explains Barry. We finally gather ourselves to go to church, about 45 minutes after the opening bell. Kim waves off our lateness. "Marion likes to get there to hear the Word," she says. "They'll still be praising the Lord, honey."

Before we go, Barry huddles everyone in the center of his cramped living room and instructs us to grab hands for prayer. I join in, but we decide I should fall out, as the praying white reporter kind of confuses the cameraman's visual. Barry lifts his voice to the heavens, which is still mumbly, so my tape doesn't pick up the particulars. But I am struck by two things while listening to him:

The man prays with the familiarity of someone who regularly talks to God.

Who prays in front of a cameraman and *before* they go to church?

I ask the ministers and others what it would take for Barry to lose their support. Would they still support him if he killed somebody? 'Yes I would,' says one without blinking, then breaks into laughter. The ministers then give biblical murder precedents—Moses killed, David killed Bathsheba's husband, etc.

We arrive in a blue Cadillac with a missing hubcap (a loaner since his 2000 BMW is in the shop). The ushers at the Temple of Praise in southeast show Barry a deference due a visiting dignitary, though it has been his home church for some years. The congregants are in the full throes of Holy Ghost power when we arrive. The percussion from both the band and all the stomping comes up through the floor, rattling the soles of your shoes. Rookies would do well to wear a mouthguard, as they might catch a stray elbow, as I did, from rapturous church ladies performing the Pentecostal shake. At one point during a song, I watch a beefy elder onstage square his shoulders, tuck his head, and dash down the steps like a fullback hitting a hole, then into a breakaway open-field sprint around the sanctuary. Natalie asks if I'm okay. "Sure," I tell her, "this is just like my church."

My vantage point is excellent, since even though we arrived an hour late, the front pew is cleared out for Barry and his entourage. He has a standing reservation whenever he wants it. Bishop Glen Staples, a silky prosperity-gospeler, welcomes "Our dear mayor-for-life. We are thankful that he is here." Staples alludes to Barry's recent troubles, saying, "I love him because he's taught me how to get back up."

Staples finds the old rhetorical rhythms, as congregants whoop on the rests. "You got to learn how to get up. [*Whoop.*] Because everybody in this life, if you are alive and breathing, that is the one thing you can be sure of, making mistakes. [*Whoop.*] When you fall down 'cause of mistakes, get back up, dust yo'self off, and start over again. [*Whoop.*]" Staples instructs us to grab one person and tell them "I know you're going to make it!" The audience obliges, and whoops some more, as Barry is called to the stage over pumping, orgasmic organ.

"Praise the Lord!" Barry says. "Hallelujah!" He is echoed by the audience. "Whenever you see me, I'm going to praise the Lord, because with all that I've been through. [*Whoop.*] You understand." The thought doesn't need to be finished. They understand.

Barry says the media have tried to demonize him, "But y'all know how much I care. [*Whoop.*] There are a lot of

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Growing up, he says, 'I was very insecure. Didn't like my name. It was a lady's name. Didn't like my looks. Didn't like anything about myself.' Then I got to the point where I said what the hell. That's what God gave me. That's how I was born. This is how I look. To hell with them. Though I wasn't cussin' back then.'

people who don't like what I do. [*Whoop*.] Lookin' out for black people. [*Whoop*.] Lookin' out for black people. [*Whoop*.] Standin' up for black people. [*Whoop*.] They don't like it, and so I'm constantly attacked. But because of God's mercy and grace and power. [*Whoop. Whoop. Whoop.*]"

Again, he doesn't need to finish. The crowd is all about extending however much forgiveness he needs, even if he doesn't feel he needs any, and it was never asked for. "So I want to thank this congregation and the bishop for your prayers," Barry continues. "Thank you Temple of Praise. You love me, and I love you!"

Bishop Staples retakes the pulpit and whips the crowd into a frenzy with a hell-for-leather sing-songy sermon that is half T.D. Jakes, half Otis Redding. Only amateurs wait for the altar call. Most just come up front during the sermon, wailing and whooping and feeling the electric surge of Holy Ghost power hitting in jolts like the Staples-punctuating organ.

Staples laces the sermon with plenty of Barry references. But the main subject is Paul and his thorn-of-the-flesh, which God wouldn't remove. Instead, Staples says, God told Paul, "'I'm gonna leave it right there, to keep you humble.' . . . You better believe that everybody in here got a thorn in yo' flesh. . . . But God said the prescription that I'm gonna give you for your malady of being a human being is called grace."

Barry is by now transported himself. He gets up and joins the mosh pit of ululators, swinging his arms like a child readying himself for the standing broad-jump at a school track meet. When asked afterward what part of the sermon spoke to him most, he says, "All of it," then starts throwing some Bible himself. "It says, 'Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world,'" Barry says, adding his own interpretation: "Greater than devils, and evildoers, and haters . . . Barry critics."

It's a tad ironic that while all but Emperor-for-Life in Ward 8, Barry didn't make his bones as mayor by standing up for "the last, the least, and the lost," as he has spent the post-Vista half of his career rebranding himself in these parts. While his signature summer-jobs program for youth insured that you can swing a cat in a local black neighborhood and hit five adults for whom Barry provided their first gig, his primary accomplishment was riding '80s-era real-estate-boom market forces.

Barry threw the city open to development the likes of which D.C. hadn't seen before. He was so proactive that old staffers tell how, early in his mayoral tenure, he used to have weekly brainstorming brown-bag lunches with architects and developers and would fast-track formerly glacial construction-approval processes with Post-it notes saying "Good idea, do it!" When he assumed office in 1979, whole quadrants of the city were ghost towns, and there were streets untouched since they were torched in the '68 riots.

During Barry's first term, 70 new buildings were either started or completed, and millions of new square feet of downtown office space were added. Even Republicans, after rolling through their mental rolodex of Chris Rock crack-smoking jokes or using Barry as a handy excuse to deny D.C. statehood, sometimes recall the '80s-era Barry with fondness. Even if there were accusations of untoward cronyism, he was a mayor you could do business with. "The one thing Barry fundamentally understood is that nobody—not the city, not the private sector—profits off a weed-strewn lot. In that way, he was a supply-sider," says one.

In other ways, though, he was a raging redistributionist. "Some call it socialistic, some call it democratic," Barry tells me. "I don't go by labels, they don't mean s— to me." Figuring if the Poles and Italians could feather nests in Chicago and the Irish could dominate Boston, Barry ruthlessly insisted that all of his departments meet minority set-aside contracting quotas, up to 30 percent. At the same time, his knack for creating patronage jobs would've left Huey Long gaping in awe. At one point in the late '80s, the city didn't even know how many employees it had on its own payroll (an independent commission estimated there was one city worker for every 13 residents). By the end of Barry's third term, shortly before the Vista bust, the size of the municipal payroll had swelled to 52,000— that's 14,000 more taxpayer-funded jobs than Los Angeles, a city five times the size of D.C.

Barry, always intent on buffing the scratches out of his legacy, tells me that he didn't just foster a black middle class in D.C., but also in neighboring Prince George's County. He's more right than he'd like to be. For much of the newly created black wealth fled the city, as they had a much better chance of enjoying their spoils without getting shot in the suburbs.

Barry's early electoral success was also partly attributable to lily-white affluent do-goodniks, enamored by the exotic former black radical taking on the establishment. He was championed by the *Washington Post*, which endorsed him in

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three out of his four runs for mayor, though the *Post*'s editors later publicly wished they could rescind the last one. But his consistent racial polarization and claims of martyrdom when running into various ethical and personal lapses eventually cost him that goodwill.

In the late '80s, most of the poor black wards became drug-ravaged killing fields, and it was their voters that saved Barry's hide in subsequent elections. (Barry's talents as a political Machiavelli are grossly underrated—he's only lost one election ever, for an at-large council seat right after his trial. "I had to get that out of my system," he jokes. "Even then, I got 50,000 votes.") Some of these circumstances were far beyond Barry's control. But then, some of them weren't. As Harry Jaffe and Tom Sherwood detailed in their 1994 book *Dream City*, D.C. became an inefficient, pothole-ridden sinkhole, and even Barry himself admits that he'd lost all energy by the third term (1987-91). "I was getting tireder and tireder," he tells me, "because the job was so damn hard."

Most of the talent that had graced his first administration had left through attrition and indictment. The schools ranked as some of the worst in the nation. The hobbled police force was literally outgunned by homegrown drug-dealers and their imported Jamaican rivals. Barry was distracted, disconnected, and partying like he was getting paid by the gram of whatever he ingested. As *Dream City* suggested, some of his more suspicious hospital visits for things like "hiatal hernia" were likely cocaine-related.

Things grew so bleak, that the liberal *Washington Monthly* even ran a piece in 1989 that jeopardized Detroit's civic pride, with a detailed house-of-horrors portrait entitled "The Worst City Government in America—Washington D.C."

But here at the Temple of Praise, people don't break out the scales and stack Barry's good deeds versus his bad ones. His popularity here transcends such minutiae. Supporting him, in spite of his struggles—even because of them—is almost a symbolic sacrament. Plus, he does something few other politicians in the District, even the city's later black mayors, do: He shows up.

Over the course of my time with him, he shows up to senior centers, where he gives 20 bucks to the oldest doll in attendance, which often takes some sorting out, what with senility. He shows up to the planning of the Labor Day picnic that he throws out of his own budget, overseeing details down to the hot dogs and what Go-Go bands are hired. The fact that he regularly gets raked over the coals by newspapers—which Barry tells me Ward 8ers largely don't read—for tax evasion and traffic arrests and addiction issues and many of the pathologies that plague their community in such numbers might help him rather than hurt him.

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One morning, Barry hauls me to a "Ward 8 Leadership Council" breakfast at the gleaming, new IHOP—considered a Ward 8 development triumph, which Barry helped champion. I find out that there isn't technically a "Ward 8 Leadership Council." Barry has merely assembled 17 people in a back room—everyone from activists to ministers to community leaders to a Giant store manager (the first grocery chain to do business in the ward in a decade). There's even a white real estate developer named Jeff Epperson, who has a Texan accent, used to work for the National Republican Senatorial Committee, and speaks from experience that "politicians and perfect behavior should never be mentioned in the same sentence."

They tell me of Barry's tireless devotion to the ward, of how "he remembers people that don't have no title, no nothing," of how after 40 years of public life he will "stand at the gate" for Ward 8 "and knows every crook and cranny in city hall, he knows exactly where the money is at, where the dead bodies are," and can therefore put people with resources.

They tell me how the ward is finally moving in the right direction (Epperson's company is investing there), even if Bishop C. Matthew Hudson of Matthews Memorial Baptist says he's preaching two funerals that week—one for a gunned-down 18-year-old, the other for a 76-year-old man beaten by a group of teenagers on Malcolm X Boulevard. (One afternoon, when tracking home with Barry, we get out of the car to see a dozen squad cars at the Congress Heights Metro Station, as a young man in a wife-beater is being cuffed and put into one of them, while the woman he just assaulted, and who dropped her baby in the melee, lies crying on the ground. "In Ward 8," Barry tells me, "if it ain't one thing, it's another. But it's always something.")

The IHOP convocation is a Barry-engineered Potemkin exhibit, to be sure. But the intensity of their possessiveness is no put-up job, and is similar to what I encounter all over the ward. When I interview Barry standing on Alabama Avenue, a random car pulls up and a woman yells out the window, "Are they pickin' on you again?" The IHOP amen corner pisses blood over the way their man has been pilloried for behavior that's conveniently forgotten when it comes to the likes of Bill Clinton or Ted Kennedy.

As James Coates, senior minister of Bethlehem Baptist Church, says, "He understands our path—stony the road we trod. So when someone attacks Mr. Barry, they attack all of us." I push back, and ask the ministers and others what it would take for Barry to lose their support. Would they still support him if he killed somebody? "Yes I would," says Coates without blinking, then breaks into laughter. The ministers then give biblical murder precedents—Moses killed, David killed Bathsheba's husband, etc. "I'm coming to your church next week," says Epperson.

When I visit Barry's constituency office one day in the

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ward, conveniently located a few floors above the local welfare office, the intensity of this devotion is put quite explicitly to me by a woman who mans Barry's phones and who's been volunteering for him for years. She wears a matching African-print gown and head-wrap, and she is called "Mother Boone." She says she came to D.C. decades ago, when her husband was laid up overseas in a hospital after getting injured in the war—she doesn't remember which war.

"It started with a 'K,'" she says, her spotty memory failing her.

"Korea?" I ask.

"Maybe," she says.

After arriving from St. Louis, she lived in her car with her baby. "The front seat was my living room, the back was my bedroom." Who gave her shoes and milk for her baby? "Mr. Barry!" Boone says. Who found her a place to live? "Mr. Barry!" When she was shot in the stomach after getting carjacked, she got a special room at the hospital with extra flowers and nightgowns and the works. "Guess who was there with me," Mother Boone intones, practically grabbing my lapels. "Gawwwd, and Jesus, and MR. BARRY!"

A few minutes later, I ask Barry if she in fact got shot when she was carjacked. He shrugs, and says, "I don't know." Mother Boone "goes in and out," a staffer explains. In some parts of the city, Barry can't buy credit for things he's legitimately done. In Ward 8, he gets credit even for the things he hasn't.

After church, Barry is famished. If you participate in a Temple of Praise service, your cardio requirement is fulfilled for the day. Barry insists on taking me and the Barry Angels to the pricey Old Ebbitt Grill downtown, since the only sit-down restaurants in Ward 8 are the IHOP and a former topless bar, the Players Lounge, where Barry likes to order the liver and onions and occasionally takes the stage to sing his theme song, T-Bone Walker's "Stormy Monday."

Before we go, however, we have to deposit "what little money I have" in his account so his debit card can cover it. The Caddy rolls up to a Safeway grocery store in neighboring Ward 7, which contains a SunTrust bank counter that sits behind bullet-proof glass. Barry and I go in, and he spies the long line. "Oh my God, I gotta cut that," he says. So he heads to the front of the line and negotiates with a woman, telling her he's with a reporter, and he's in a hurry (after cutting, he'll later work every person in the line, as he's a perpetual campaigner).

While I wait behind him, a woman with a neck tattoo and bandanna-covered head approaches, assuming I'm a Barry staffer. Her name is Vicki Mitchell, and she's on the phone with her son, Lejeevan Toudle, who's currently in

A booty-shaking lass walks by, giving Barry the eye. Kim, his kidney donor, offers play-by-play from the backseat: 'We call it grinnin' and skinnin'.' 'God gave me the gift of being gregarious,' Barry explains. 'I'm a touchy-feely kind of person.'

lock-up for armed robbery. Telling her son Mayor Barry just walked in, she tells me, "My son said to tell you D.C. jail ain't got no air. You wanna speak to him?"

I grab the phone, and Lejeevan proceeds to tell me how it's 110 degrees in his cell. Not only that, "the canteen is messed up, they don't give us what we ordered." Spying my notebook, his mother adds, "put that on the list." I ask Lejeevan if he wants to speak with the mayor, who's technically a City Councilman. He does. I hand the phone to Barry. "Yeah, what's happenin'?" Barry says, hearing his complaints. "Alright," says Barry. "I can deal with that tomorrow, can't deal with that today." Barry gives me Lejeevan's phone number to write down, but is a digit short. No matter. He never asks me for it anyway.

Back in the car outside the Safeway, a booty-shaking lass walks by, giving Barry the eye. Kim, the kidney donor, offers play-by-play from the backseat: "We call it grinnin' and skinnin'."

"Y'all leave her alone, now," says Barry, adding, "I'm glad I'm in the car."

"We glad you are too," says Kim, "or you'd be out there another 15 minutes."

"God gave me the gift of being gregarious," Barry explains. "I'm a touchy-feely kind of person." I offer that that's gotten him in a spot of trouble in the past. "A little bit," says Kim, caustically. "Everybody has some trouble sometimes," Barry assents. Another Safeway patron extends well wishes through the car window. "I don't care what nobody says. You my man!" he says. "I can't come in here," Barry says to me. "If I were to shop, I wouldn't be out of here till three hours later."

Arriving at Old Ebbitt, we are seated in a side-room in the front of the restaurant ("the slave quarters" one of the girls calls it). Barry orders his favorite, the trout parmesan, and shows a sign of aging, as he occasionally does, when asking the waiter where his spinach and mashed potatoes are—they're under his fish.

I order a post-church bourbon, and Barry joins me by ordering a white zinfandel, having sworn off the cognac—along with the cocaine, he insists—that used to cause him so many problems. If he bothers ordering any, he stops at one

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Marion Barry was, is, and will always be a ladies' man. 'First of all, I love people,' Barry says. 'Attractive women. They're all attractive to me if they're female.'

glass of wine during the many meals we have together. Still, I'm pretty sure that's not in the program of the AA meetings he's attended for years. Isn't even one glass of wine bad for his sobriety?

"No, it's bad for my kidney," he says, telling me everybody deals with addiction differently. "I do it my way," he says. "Oh no," says his spokeswoman, Natalie, sitting beside him.

I hadn't visited Barry to put him on the rack. But his responses to addiction issues, along with a host of his other troubles, practically dictate that any self-respecting reporter play prosecuting attorney. Barry is gentlemanly, never malicious, but he's also eternally argumentative. Anything you preface with "I read in the *City Paper* or *Washington Post*" will immediately elicit an objection. So that if, for instance, you told him you'd read that he loved his mother, he'd have to insist he didn't.

It's understandable, perhaps, that a man who is constantly under attack tends toward the defensive. But Barry frequently loses track of his own narrative, contradicts his former public utterances, and shows a less-than-straightforward hold on the truth. Over the entirety of our time together, we incessantly play cat-and-mouse. At various times, he insists he never really had an alcohol or serious drug problem—that his post-Vista trip to Hazelden was a "tactical move" for the upcoming trial. Then later he'll admit that alcohol is his only real addiction.

When I ask Barry how a 73-year-old man can still find so much trouble, he says, "I don't get into trouble. People *get* me in trouble." But he does have a knack for getting into more trouble even when he's seemingly in more trouble than he could already be in. For instance, when already in prison, he was transferred to another facility after witnesses reported seeing him receive oral gratification from a female admirer in the visitation room. (He denies it to this day.) And after failing to pay his taxes for roughly seven years, repeatedly getting hauled before judges for his negligence, and having his pay garnished for roughly $3,050 per month (he says it was due to "procrastination"), Barry was put on probation by a judge and subsequently failed a drug test in 2006. Barry insists it was an unfortunate relapse. As with most of his problems, "a woman was involved," he admits.

Yet he swears that despite persistent rumors and even public declarations by his friends calling for him to take his sobriety more seriously, he did not use drugs from the time of his 1990 arrest until the 2006 relapse. When I bring up a 2002 incident, when police found a $5 rock in his car and claimed Barry had white powder on his face (they didn't charge him, saying they were trace amounts), Barry insists it was a frame-up. "It's really not consistent," he says. "If I'm smoking crack, I don't have powder on my face." He decided not to run for City Council afterwards, and his fourth wife left him two weeks later, but he insists none of this was related.

I mention to Barry that his real addiction seems to be women. And in fact, in the early '90s, he confessed to sex addiction. "I never said that," he insists. Yes he did, I inform him. I had just read the clip the night before. He said it on an episode of *Sally Jessy Raphael*. "No, that's bulls—," he says. "We made a tactical mistake. We were trying to get our story out about what happened at the Vista, and she put me on with a sexually addicted person. We corrected that." I recheck the *Washington Post* clip later. Headline: "Marion Barry, Airing His Vices; On Sally Jessy Raphael, the Ex-Mayor Tells of Sex Addiction."

So naturally defensive is Barry that at one point, when driving around Ward 8, I ask him what pisses him off most about what he sees. "Some things don't piss me off, some things make me angry."

That's the same thing, I tell him. Natalie laughs, and shakes her head, as though I'm seeing what she's up against.

"Nah, nah, there's a difference," he says.

"You argue about everything!" I tell him.

"I have to!"

Barry feels like he's been in a fight his entire life. Born to Mississippi sharecroppers (his mother used to carry him around in a cotton sack in the fields), she split for Memphis with Barry and his sisters when he was eight, leaving his father behind. Barry never saw him again. "I used to be ashamed of that," says Barry. "So in my bio, I used to say he died. 'Cause I was ashamed that I didn't have a natural father."

Growing up, he says, "I was very insecure. Didn't like my name. It was a lady's name. Didn't like my looks. Didn't like anything about myself." Kids would tease him about his name, and "I'd pop 'em in the mouth, damn right I would. Then I got to the point where I said what the hell. That's what God gave me. That's how I was born. This is how I look. To hell with them. Though I wasn't cussin' back then."

Sure, Barry has taken a beating over the years. "But I'm not supposed to be here," he tells me. When he was in high school, he'd never even heard of college, didn't know what it was. "In fact," he says, "my sixth-grade teacher told me, 'Marion Barry, you not gonna be anything. You're not gonna

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be anywhere.' I went home and cried to my mother. She said, 'Now don't listen to that stuff. You can do anything you want to do.' Here's a woman with a fourth-grade education talkin' about what I could do."

"I felt depressed for a couple days, then I said I'm not gonna buy that in my own mind." He became an achiever. He consistently made the honor roll. He was an Eagle Scout. He recited poems in church. He went to college, and stopped one year short of getting his doctorate in chemistry, quitting to join the civil rights movement. "In chemistry, there's order," he says wistfully. "In politics, there's disorder. The rules change just about every other day."

I mention to Barry that for all his biblical invocations, the Bible teaches us to be humble, a trait he doesn't often display. "But there's a time to be humble, and a time not to be humble."

"When's the time not to be?" I ask.

"In front of your enemies," he says. "Because if they're trying to break your spirit, even if your spirit is broken, you can't let them know it. . . . God gave me a strong spirit. People expect me to come in with my head down and out. Not me. I'm not doing it. I hold my head up. High."

Barry's spirit is sung home to me by longtime Barry-watcher and critic Mark Plotkin, a political analyst for WTOP radio. In 1986, Plotkin unsuccessfully ran for City Council, and in the midst of his campaign, went to see Barry, who shared some advice. "I don't remember anything else he said," says Plotkin. "But the one thing that sticks in my mind 23 years later, which sums him up, is he told me, 'My whole life, people have told me what I can't do. And I'm not going to abide by that.'"

"I think that's what motivates him more than anything," says Plotkin. He remembers talking to Barry right before sentencing in the income tax case. "I said, 'How do you feel about this?' He said, 'Well, you never know how these things turn out.' He was majorly calm. I'd be a sweating wreck. He was literally flirting with the clerk who announced the verdict. Talk about chutzpah."

After lunch at the Old Ebbitt, the check comes. I offer to split it, but Barry waves me off and throws down his debit card. The waitress disappears, then returns apologetically, informing Barry that his card's been rejected. I throw my credit card instead, and Barry's spokesperson Natalie panics, saying she should pay so I won't write about it. I tell her I will anyway, so she might as well let it ride.

A symposium commences at the table on the journalistic pros and cons of what just happened. The only person who doesn't care in the least? Marion Barry. "It just shows I'm human," he says. "Millions of Americans go through this every day. Think they got the bank thing straight, don't

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have it straight. Come on. . . . We make mistakes. We have frailties." It turns out Barry has a big wad of bills in his pocket, which we notice when he tips the valet outside. "You could've paid for lunch," observes Natalie. "I had it," says Barry. "But whenever THE WEEKLY STANDARD offers to pay, I'm takin' it."

"Welcome to the family," Natalie says with a grimace.

A few days later, Barry wants to return the favor, taking me and Natalie to lunch at Acadiana, a New Orleans-style eatery where he'll have the fried catfish and watermelon salad. First, though, he has to go to a downtown SunTrust and see what's what with his card and his retirement check, which seems to be missing from direct deposit.

"Who do I see about a problem with my card?" he says, once in the bank. As Barry cools his heels, customers, both white and black, come up to make small talk and take cellphone pictures. The branch manager, Yolette Olufemi, sits down with Barry and checks the damage. She looks a little sheepish about what she's discovered and gingerly informs him that Thrifty Car Rental has billed his card for $1,353.10, which has caused him to be overdrawn and to be assessed an additional penalty.

Barry mutters that the police impounded his car during the stalking-charge episode, and, though they didn't press charges, "The police had my car. For a week. Illegally." He must've forgotten to pay for the rental car he needed in the meantime. He tells her apologetically that he should have his paycheck soon, and can cover the shortfall. She sees me taking notes, and seems somewhat embarrassed for him, telling Barry she waited on him six years ago, and thanked him then, because he was responsible for her first summer job when she was a high school student. "Those lifetime experiences helped to put me where I am today. So I always say, 'Kudos Mr. Barry,'" she adds with somewhat strained cheer, offering to reduce his overdrawn penalty.

Marion Barry was, is, and will always be a ladies' man. We talk about women plenty. When I chat up one of his supporters, commenting on the fake gemstones glued to her eyelashes, Barry leans over my shoulder and says, "Don't hit on those women. That's my job."

One of the women he won't talk about much is Donna Watts-Brighthaupt, the central character in his current troubles. But when I ask him what the biggest regret of his life is, he has only one woman on his mind: "Effi."

He's referring to the late Effi Barry, his third wife and mother of his son, Christopher. Effi was an elegant former model with an aristocratic bearing, best known for sitting by Barry every day during the six-week Vista trial, hooking a rug in supportive silence, while a parade of witnesses detailed sex'n'drug specifics that would've caused any normal wife to have a stroke.

She stuck with Barry for a while longer, then left him before he went to prison. They remained close, however. And he says that in the years before she died of myeloid leukemia in 2007, they even talked about getting remarried. The depth of his affection for her was evidenced from what he said at her funeral at National Cathedral: "I was not late, this time, Effi. I was on time."

One afternoon, in Barry's City Council office, after a vigorous interrogation, he says, "Wanna go to lunch? I ain't got no money. Card's still messed up." Before we do, however, he walks over to a framed photo of him with a laughing Effi at a chamber of commerce dinner. "Come look at this over here. Look how fine she looks. Yeah, my God." I ask if he misses her. "Absolutely," he says. "I do. I miss her. For about the last ten years or so, I didn't dream. After my transplant, I started dreaming again. I dream in color. The toxins are out of my body. . . . Two or three nights ago, I dreamed about her."

I ask what he dreamed. "I don't want to get into that," Barry says, as he often does about subjects he brings up.

Later that day, she comes up again. Barry has insisted we visit Linda Greene, his "fine" former chief of staff and decades-long friend, at her beautiful restored Victorian at the foot of a national parkland hill in Anacostia, atop which sits Frederick Douglass's old house.

Inside Linda's living room, the television is on, showing the "beer summit" between Obama, Skip Gates, and the Cambridge cop who arrested him. Barry and I both agree the spectacle of Obama and Co. pretending they're just regular guys having a brew is preposterous. When I suggest it might be useful for him to have a beer summit with the police, he grunts: "They'd probably poison my beer."

Barry sinks back on his shoulders into Linda's luxurious couch, while eating pineapple and cheese slices from an hors d'oeuvres tray. She takes a seat on the arm of the couch beside him. They flirt, they reminisce, she fusses over his tie, telling him she doesn't like it much. They seem like an affectionate, old married couple. I ask if they've ever been romantic. They both insist not, though Linda says her ex-husband still asks her if they ever got it on.

Linda was one of Effi's best friends and was with her at the end, so she and Barry start trading off, giving me the blow-by-blow of Effi's last days. Barry had seen Effi shortly before, in what ended up being her deathbed in Annapolis. "Even then," he recalls, "She said, 'Marion, I'm getting tired. I'm getting tired.' I said 'You're not getting tired. It's gonna be alright. You're gonna make it through this. We've gone through worse than this.'"

Shortly thereafter, he left for Memphis to see his ailing mother. Linda called him while he was there and told him this was it. He knew he couldn't get back in time. "About

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ten minutes later," Barry says, "Linda called back again and said she's gone." His face pinches when he says this, his lip starts quivering. He shuts his eyes tight, and tears stream from them, which he quickly covers with his hand, so nobody can see.

He eventually lightens the mood, looking at Linda, "Linda complains about me sometimes. But Effi willed me to you. So I'm stuck."

Both Barry and Linda talk freely about how much he cared for Effi, which prompts me to ask how he could put her through what he did: the infidelity, the public humiliation. Linda covers for him: "He's not doing it out of disrespect, or less love for the person he's committed to at that time."

Barry takes this in, meditatively chewing on a pineapple slice. "I haven't thought about it much," he confesses. "First of all, I love people. Attractive women. They're all attractive to me if they're female." We laugh.

"No, really," he insists:

> But I guess part of what happens in life is you are what you see. Growing up without a natural father, I didn't see these one-on-one relationships. I'm just thinking about it for the first time, quite frankly. I mean I've thought about it, but not in this depth. . . . I think there ought to be fidelity between a man and a woman. . . . But you are what you see. And when I was growing up, I didn't see men who were one-woman men. So I guess it sort of got caught in my personality. I'm not rationalizing it. It is what it is.

We're ready to leave Linda's. We go out to the car, and on the floor of the backseat is a Häagen-Dazs cup filled with melted butter-pecan ice-cream. Natalie had bought Barry a cone when she was driving us around D.C., as Barry showed me his mayoral-era development triumphs. But the cone started dripping all over his suit. I suggested throwing it out the window, but this is Barry's city. He adamantly refused. He might run afoul of the law every now and then, but he's not some kind of litterbug. So instead, he quickly ate it while letting the rest drip into the cup.

When he slides into the car at Linda's, he reaches down, drinks the melted ice cream, then hands the empty cup to Linda. "Oh thanks," she says. "Now I'm the trash-woman."

Several days later, I follow Barry to New York for the premiere of *The Nine Lives of Marion Barry*. He is in his glory, disembarking from a stretch limo with his Angels for a screening high atop the HBO building, which overlooks the yoganauts and ping-pong players of Bryant Park. He sings a few bars of the old gospel hymn "Victory is Mine" when he takes the microphone after the screening (*I told Satan to get thee behind / Victory today is mine*). He accepts well wishes from statuesque blondes, who are aroused at the sight of a young, militant Barry in a leopard-print dashiki. "You're a beautiful man, I just want to put that out there," says one.

At a reception buffet line, I run into Jim Vance, a tall, well-dressed, barrel-chested African-American news anchor from D.C.—half of the longest running anchor-team in Washington—who has known and covered Barry since the late '60s. Vance, too, was addicted to cocaine for seven years back in the '80s.

Around Barry, Vance is all hugs and smiles. But I ask him to give me his straight-up assessment of Barry. He raises his eyes to the ceiling, thinks a bit, then says, "There were so many of us who had so much hope for Marion. I don't know too many people that were more blessed or that had more skills than Marion had, nor too many people who were a bigger disappointment, quite frankly."

Vance's own addiction "snuck up on me":

> It was a pattern of behavior that was nobody's fault but my own. I think the same applied to Marion. A pattern of behavior began that Marion couldn't blame anybody, or anything, except Marion for. There comes a point for most of us who are addicts, that today, I'm either gonna live, or gonna die. And you begin the process of living, or continue the process of dying. I don't know that Marion's got to that point yet.

After the screening, Barry and the Angels and I load into the limo and head uptown for chicken 'n' waffles, fried catfish, and shrimp étouffée. It's supposed to be the last of our time together, but he insists on breakfast the next morning, to clear a few things up. Just as he'll do when he calls me a few days later, unbidden, at home.

The specifics of what he says turn out not to be that important. But it feels as though he is addressing some advice I'd given him when catching him at the screening. Earlier that afternoon, from my hotel, I'd watched him tussle with an MSNBC anchor while promoting the film, Barry insisting yet again that he'd done nothing wrong at the Vista. I suggested to him that if he didn't insult people's intelligence regarding the things they already know about him, he might get a fairer hearing regarding the things they don't know.

So, for instance, at breakfast the following morning, Barry offers, "When I told you about recreational use, I don't want you to think I'm trying to minimize it. It was a serious problem, yeah. But the good news is, look at me now!" Of course, such rare moments of honest disclosure come between hours and hours of amnesia, revisionism, suspect self-justification, air-brushing, and legacy-buffing.

But that's okay. It felt, over the time I was with him, that there were several moments where Marion Barry was trying to tell me something. Maybe even the truth. If he can't quite always get there, it's still a commendable effort. After all, he hasn't had much practice. ♦

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Panorama of Edinburgh by Birket Foster

The Magazine Game

When Scotland's team excelled

BY SARA LODGE

The most distinctive thing about English literary journalism in the early 19th century is that it was Scottish. This was the great age of the magazine. As John Wilson, alias "Christopher North," the editor of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, smugly observed in 1829: "Look at our literature now, and it is all periodical together. A thousand daily, thrice-a-week, twice-a-week, weekly newspapers, a hundred monthlies, fifty quarterly, and twenty-five annuals!"

He was, as usual, exaggerating—but not much. Books were expensive during and immediately after the Napoleonic wars. New print technologies, meanwhile, meant that journals could be produced at greater speed and in greater numbers than ever before. The result was that, after 1800, and for at least three decades, it was the periodical, not the hardback, that dominated literary discourse. All the great Victorian writers—the Brontë sisters, Charles Dickens, George Eliot—learned their strokes by swimming in the mighty river of print journalism.

Scottish Men of Letters and the New Public Sphere
1802-1834
by Barton Swaim
Bucknell, 219 pp., $51

And that river flowed from north to south. The Whiggish *Edinburgh Review* (founded 1802), the Tory *Quarterly Review* (1809), the capricious *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (1817), and its metropolitan rival the *London Magazine* (1820)—all were edited, and in large part written, by Scots. The first three set a standard for rhetorical flourish, intellectual scope, and biting wit that all subsequent literary journals would imitate. Indeed, in producing the magazines that dominated literary criticism in the first decades of the 19th century, Scotland was not merely asserting the skill and sophistication of her sharpest writers, she was setting the tone for British national conversation about politics and culture.

Barton Swaim's *Scottish Men of Letters and the New Public Sphere* sets out to ask how and why Scots came to dominate the field of literary journalism in this period and how they conjured a "public sphere" in prose. He takes as case studies four lions of the periodical realm: Francis Jeffrey, John Wilson, John Gibson Lockhart, and Thomas Carlyle. None of these figures has been very kindly treated by recent historical memory: The orotund voice and the 15-page feature are not fashionable in current journalism. Swaim

Sara Lodge, lecturer in English at the University of St Andrews, is the author of Thomas Hood and Nineteenth-Century Poetry *and* Jane Eyre: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism.

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rightly asks us to reassess the importance of the contribution these authors and editors made in their magazine writing, particularly the way in which they conceived their audience and, in doing so, changed it.

Francis Jeffrey is now often known, if at all, as the man who was wrong about Wordsworth. The famously damning opening of his 1814 review of Wordsworth's long poem *The Excursion*—"This will never do!"—became a sound bite that bit back in the same way as the unfortunate studio pronouncement that Fred Astaire "can't act; can't sing; can dance a little."

As Swaim draws out, there is much more to Jeffrey's journalism than this. As master of ceremonies in the *Edinburgh Review*, Jeffrey created a magisterial yet complex and sometimes contradictory persona that even politically unsympathetic readers felt they could not afford to ignore. His encomia and diatribes might sometimes be unpalatable, but they were never dull. Where previous magazines had attempted comprehensiveness, offering brief reviews of a score of publications, the *Edinburgh Review* was selective: It dared to declare what was worth reading, and why.

Jeffrey, who insisted upon the inseparability of literary and political life, established the authority of the *Review* as (in Swaim's words) "an engine of social and political progress presiding over a nascent public sphere." A "benevolent dictator," he at once lauded the democratic possibilities offered by an intelligent, educated, mass audience—the kind of audience that Scotland, with her higher relative literacy levels and more egalitarian educational system, seemed to promise—and shrank from the implications of devolving power.

As such, Jeffrey was a more thoughtful and politically nuanced writer than Wordsworthian scholars often assume. Swaim suggests, intriguingly, that Jeffrey objected to Wordsworth's idealized poetic portrayal of the peasantry not because it represented a radical challenge to traditional social hierarchies but because he felt it to be a falsifying and sentimental view: a portrait of the poor that ignored their real condition. Where Wordsworth valorized the countryside and denounced the enervating effects of urban commerce with its cheap stimuli, Jeffrey saw the town and its crowded periodicals as a source of enlightenment and potential escape from the worst hardships of manual labor.

As Swaim puts it, "In a limited but real sense Jeffrey attacks Wordsworth from the left rather than the right."

If Scotland's more broad-based and accessible education system, which prepared the ground for a mass magazine audience, was one reason for Scottish dominance in early 19th-century journalism, the importance of rhetoric in Scottish educational culture was another. Several of Scotland's universities appointed university chairs in rhetoric, and Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* was one of the most widely taught texts of the late 18th century. Swaim persuasively argues that the new wave of Scottish periodicals, particularly *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, developed a new style of "conversational" journalism that foreshadowed the art of rhetorical performance and debate.

Thomas Carlyle, 1854

NEWSCOM

John Wilson ("Christopher North"), the flamboyant editor of *Blackwood's*, fulfilled the role of exhibitionist raconteur *par excellence*. Wilson, so arch, waspish, and exuberant that his voice now sometimes seems camp, made a point of including the reader in the highly decorated drawing room of his prose as an imagined physical presence. Talking about potatoes, he exclaims: "Reader! Lay your hand upon your heart and say, have you ever more than thrice, during the course of a long life, eaten . . . a boiled mealy or waxy? We hear you answer in the negative."

Readers, unaccustomed to literary celebrities asking about their eating habits, lapped *Blackwood's* up. A regular feature in the *Magazine* was the "Noctes Ambrosianae" (Ambrosial Nights), which affected to present conversations between different *Blackwood's* contributors as they boozed at Ambrose's Tavern. Something between a piece of discursive journalism and a piece of creative fiction, the "Noctes" offered something new: an imaginary opportunity to join *Blackwood's* contributors at the bar for a frank and free exchange of views. Not until the Internet invented the interactive blog would periodical writers and their public get so close again.

Swaim's third chapter deals with John Gibson Lockhart, now chiefly remembered as Sir Walter Scott's son-in-law and biographer, but also a prominent editor and journalist. This, the weakest chapter in the book, makes the argument that Scottish writers and readers were particularly drawn to journalism in this period because of lingering Calvinist mistrust of the dangers of imaginative literature: poetry and novels.

That such (to us surprising) mistrust was a feature of early 19th-century life is undeniable. But it was not particularly or peculiarly Scottish. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in his *Biographia Literaria* (1817), reflected that novel reading was no better than "gaming, swinging or swaying on a chair or gate; or spitting over a bridge." In an 1813 letter, Lord Byron remarked that "when I do read, I can only bear the chicken broth of—*anything* but novels." And Jane Austen, tongue firmly in cheek, was commenting on a general prejudice when, in *Northanger Abbey*, she lamented that "there seems almost a general wish of decrying the capac-

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ity and undervaluing the labour of the novelist, and of slighting the performances which have only genius, wit, and taste to recommend them."

Swaim, however, makes the reasonable point that John Gibson Lockhart seeks to resolve the barely respectable position of the writer in this period by conceptualizing him as a new blend of selfless amateurism and dignified professionalism. In effect, he contends, Lockhart holds up Sir Walter Scott, who was both a working lawyer and a part-time novelist, as the very model of what a modern author should be.

Certainly the newly self-referential magazines of the early 19th century raise questions about who writes, and how, and when they find the opportunity to do so. Many journalists were also lawyers, clerks, or clergymen; several were women. As articles were typically pseudonymous, the magazine was a masked ball in which peasants and princesses might (theoretically) mingle on equal terms. This is one of the ways in which periodicals of this time prepare the ground for the greater democratic participation that followed the extension of the franchise in Britain in 1832 and 1867.

Swaim's final chapter discusses Thomas Carlyle and argues for the influence of the Presbyterian sermon in Carlyle's writing and, more generally, in generating the assertive periodical culture of early 19th-century Scotland. This is not a difficult case to make: Carlyle is a pulpit orator who loses his faith in Christianity without ever losing his faith in jeremiad. History becomes the "real prophetic manuscript" from which he interprets "Signs of the Times" that include the fatal mechanization of modern life.

Ironically, of course, it was that very mechanization that enabled Carlyle and other periodical writers to reach a wide audience and, Swaim argues, to conceive of a new "public sphere" in which individuals of different ranks, independent of church or crown, could debate public issues through rational argument.

Scottish Men of Letters is clearly based on a doctoral thesis, and the casual reader may be deflected by the detail of the bones Swaim picks, which can distract from the larger skeleton he excavates. That skeleton—the vast body of Scottish journalism during 1800-1830—has lain too long neglected, however, and Barton Swaim's thoughtful analysis draws welcome attention to its power and influence.

In the last 20 years we have experienced our own communications revolution: Texts and emails, Facebook and Twitter, have created a world in which to type is to talk. Everyone speaks to everyone else in print. This has produced a new global intimacy, but also new masks and bluffs, as Joe Public realizes his potential to write as Joe Pesci or Joe Conrad.

It has also opened new pathways for participative democracy. It is good to be reminded that early 19th-century Britain experienced a similar phenomenon: The growth of print journalism created a new national conversation in which unprecedented numbers of people could participate, but also a contest over authority and style and debate about how a newly expanded audience might relate to the newly expanded media.

If our era produces commentators of the caliber of Jeffrey, Wilson, Lockhart, and Carlyle, we will have no cause for concern. ♦

B&A

Boys 'n' the Hood

Manhood, that is, and why it's elusive.

BY CHRISTOPHER BENSON

The Dionysiac crowd on the Mall last winter was probably not prepared to hear their new president exhort the "young nation" to "set aside childish things."

This inaugural message troubled my ears for two reasons: the clumsy invocation of apostolic authority—St. Paul was the one who said "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things"—and the presumptive maturity of a young leader instructing his countrymen to grow up when his political grooming was limited to 20 years of catechesis under the pastorate of a black supremacist, two look-at-me! memoirs penned before the age of 50, and a rock star keynote address at the Democratic National Convention.

If Barack Obama does not strike you as a paragon of maturity, neither are his predecessors George W. Bush, whose "Bring it on!" challenge to Islamic militants conjures the scene of a playground standoff, and Bill Clinton, whose sexual escapades become more intelligible with the admission, "I was born at 16 and I'll always feel I'm 16." So are we a childish nation? Or to ask the question that vexes women in nightclubs and church singles groups alike, "Where have all the men gone?"

Men to Boys
The Making of Modern Immaturity
by Gary Cross
Columbia, 328 pp., $29.50

Gary Cross, a historian at Penn State and brooding sexagenarian, explores an answer to this question in *Men to Boys*, which is part history, part psychoanalysis, and part confession. Limiting his survey to "the experience of the white middle-class American male," he traces how

> Three generations of men have challenged the genteel ideal of manhood. Over time, they have abandoned traditional markers of male maturity and embraced perpetual adolescence, and, because commercial culture reinforces both trends, today the youngest

Christopher Benson is a writer in Denver.

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generation has little experience with or taste for alternatives (genteel or otherwise).

The subject here—the "boy-man"—will not likely be the reader because Narcissus only wants to behold a flattering reflection in the pool, and what Cross casts back is disfiguring. Cultural historians will appreciate the copiously researched, subtly argued, and lucidly written account of modern immaturity, but for this thirtysomething reviewer, there was a feeling of mortification, insofar as all the cheerless statistics and salient observations about arrested development induce shame over residual boyishness. Mortification, as medieval ascetics would say, can be its own form of maturation. Thus, *Men to Boys* serves as a needed hair shirt for the regressive adult.

A note on method. Cross emphatically tells the reader that he is not making an essentialist argument about maturity. For those who are not privy to the esoteric debates of the academy, essentialism—according to *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*—draws "an objective distinction between an object's essential and accidental properties, which is not simply a reflection of how we choose to describe the object. An essential property of an object is one that it possesses in every possible world in which it exists." Social constructionism, the opposite viewpoint, contends that an object has no essential properties. What qualifies as "maturity" for a 21st-century American hipster would not qualify for a 19th-century English gentleman.

Because a transhistorical definition of male maturity would be impossible to formulate, we can better understand why Cross advances a modest cultural argument: There has been a conspicuous delay and decline in the model of manhood that prevailed after World War II, specifically permanent employment, marriage, childbearing, respect for elders, civic engagement, regular church attendance, refined taste, and formal protocol.

Rejecting Victorian patriarchy, "the culture of the boy-men today is less a life stage than a lifestyle, less a transition from childhood to adulthood than a choice to live like a teen 'forever.'" The method of his study would be more forceful if augmented with ethical and theological arguments, because our concern should not end with the way man *is* but proceed to the way he *ought* to be.

Drawing on popular culture and sociological literature, Cross chronicles the infantilizing of men in the Greatest Generation, Baby Boom Generation, and Generation X. To change the terminology, I will refer to them as Warriors, Rebels, and Slackers. Warriors were heirs to the industrial household of divided labor, where women stayed at home, serving in the role of nurturer, and men vacated the home for the office or factory, serving in the role of provider. Prior to industrialization, men worked at the home-based farm or store, acting as *both* nurturer and provider.

Wally and the Beaver, 1957

GETTY IMAGES

The result of divided labor was the economic hegemony of men and the domestic hegemony of women—aloof fathers and doting mothers. Jettisoned from the home, the warrior lived a life characterized by "career-ladder climbing, hard-working self-control, and dark-suit-wearing sobriety." The solitary cowboys of Westerns captured the imagination of postwar men because the narratives resonated with their own: "A man's world was a world largely without women and families." TV sitcoms in the 1950s and '60s—*Father Knows Best*, *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, *Leave It To Beaver*—reflected confusing messages about fatherhood, upholding a progressive emphasis on "the father as pal and a paycheck," a man sensitive enough to bond with his son through leisure activities, ranging from model railroads to Little League, and sacrificial enough to labor tirelessly for his family's piece of the American Dream, as depicted in the black-and-white simplicity of *Pleasantville*.

Not surprising, there was "a silent revolt from providership" with Beats, playboys, and hot rodders. For every comic Ward Cleaver there was a tragic Willy Loman. For every dignified Billy Graham there was a depraved Hugh Hefner. Cross speculates that some warriors chafed against "genteel respectability and responsibility" because of "Momism," the fear that maternal dominance enfeebles the boy to surmount his oedipal struggle; hypermasculinity, the combined bravado and misogyny that is driven by an embarrassing identification with the mother; alienation, the philosophy of Holden Caulfield that objects to the phoniness of bourgeois society; and hedonism, the quest for "salvation in heightened experience."

Rebels marched to Bob Dylan's anthem about the times a-changin'. Defiance was manifest in flag burning, leftist politics, draft dodging, antiwar protests, tie-dyed clothing, acid trips, hip-swiveling music, gender bending, and free love. The enemies were Brooks Brothers men, boring heterosexuals, and suburban whites. The heroes were braless women, flashy homosexuals, and militant blacks. At bottom, there was a radical mistrust in "the 'system,' not just corporate America but the government bureaucracy, the military, the university, and other institutions that seemed to be linked in a seamless web of controls that undermined democracy and personal freedom."

Rebels were inspired by the Nietzschean injunction of self-creation. Like Europeans who tried to create the "noble savage," they tried to create a New Man who would challenge what

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an Old Testament scholar calls "the dominant metanarrative of technological, military consumerism," a man who would be *au naturel* rather than ornamented, pacifist rather than aggressive, socialist rather than capitalist, egalitarian rather than authoritarian, emotional rather than rational. The pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty argues that "all any ironist can measure success against is the past—not by living up to it, but by redescribing it in his terms, thereby becoming able to say, 'Thus I willed it.'" Using this criterion for success, the rebels succeeded by redescribing adulthood as a perpetuation of adolescence.

But Cross does not share Rorty's optimism, as he discloses in this raw confession:

> Far from developing a new, improved form of male maturity, we were tempted by the possibilities of retreating into a world of playful and ultimately childlike myth. The political side of our rebellion died in negative posturing and divisive identity politics. The cultural side succumbed to a quest for the cool in rebellion from the repressive father culture and from the conformity of the "masses." Instead of creating a less consumerist society, we fueled a more dynamic and individualistic one. In doing so, we cut ourselves off from social and political relevance. We prepared the soil for the thrill-seeking culture of our sons even as we created the contradiction of the Bobo, the "mature" bourgeois male at work combined with the bohemian boy-man in play.

While the rebels did not produce a New Man, they did produce new ironies: the conformity of nonconformity, the hippie-cum-yuppie, and the commodification of youth through waxed bodies, colored hair, bleached teeth, cosmetic surgery, and enhanced virility. What began as a joke on their fathers warped into a joke on them.

If rebels rejected the past, slackers have ignored the past. To speak like a postmodernist, slackers are typified by their "rebellion without rebellion." For how can boys rebel against their fathers when their fathers were rebels *par excellence*, bequeathing to them a legacy of illegitimacy, divorce, abortion, and relativism? Even if you spin the sixties record positively, slackers yawn when they learn about how their fathers became "more civic, more tolerant, and less materialistic." The Burger King motto—"Have it your way"—leads nowhere except to what Cross aptly describes as "bemused cynicism and emotional intensity." Just consider the humor of leading boy-men Mike Myers and Jim Carrey; the fear of marital and familial responsibilities in *Seinfeld*; the elevation of peer culture in *Friends*; "the testosterone-drenched ads" of the Super Bowl; the voyeurism of reality TV; the faux news of *The Colbert Report*; the sexism of hip-hop and rap; the pornographic violence of video games such as Grand Theft Auto or Doom.

Cross offers two explanations for this inventory of retarded maturity. First, "the thrill culture compensates for 'losses' in masculine power and meaning caused by economic and social change," including the stagnation of real wages, increase of dual-job marriages, erasure of gender differences, and few opportunities for the heroism of warriors and the activism of rebels. Second, consumer culture is "emotioneering" boy-men to remain "stuck somewhere around the 'small rodent' phase of animal evolution," unable to forgo the adrenaline rush for "cultivated and complex pleasures," unable to sustain relationships with women and family.

Why? Profitability. Maturity is not a moneymaker, so marketers have a vested interest in extending the expiration date of youth, inventing terms like "tween," "middle youth," and "adultescents." Lacking the external guideposts of the past and the internal qualities of manliness ("sure-footedness, inner strength, confidence of purpose"), slackers shrink into their private funhouses.

Men to Boys concludes with competing notions about modern manhood. Alternatives to the boy-man are, first, "the benevolent patriarch, restrained and made caring and responsible by religious faith, which shames men into abandoning their wild impulses for the pleasures and duties of bourgeois providership as the head of the household"; second, "the semisecular but myth-inspired longing of men to recover a lost sense of a caring and sacrificing masculinity"; and third, "the nurturing and emotionally expressive role of the androgynous New Man, who abandons his old patriarchal privileges and embraces equality in private and public roles." Cross claims the first two solutions "remain ineffectual and often reinforce some of the most authoritarian and least rational aspects of earlier patriarchal ideals" while the third solution amounts to "the stereotypical wimp."

The secular bias of the author motivates him to dismiss the practicability of the traditional Judeo-Christian argument for male headship, so the reader is left with an unsatisfying conclusion. Cross tells us we need to forget the idealization of male maturity in the 1950s, celebrate generational differences through conversation and reflection, rethink the thrill culture by engaging in simpler activities like the "slow food" movement, and recognize our familial and social responsibilities.

Two assumptions weaken this conclusion. First, Cross assumes "the root of male immaturity is ultimately not personal but cultural," a liberal reflex that victimizes the individual. Second, he assumes male maturity must be "shorn of traditionalism, asceticism, and authoritarianism," another liberal reflex that newer is better. Notice the "isms" are an effort to denigrate custom, self-discipline, and control of any kind.

Cross reminds me of Mr. Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*, a father who anxiously observes "the wild giddiness of his youngest daughters" but is "contented with laughing at them" instead of restraining them, either because he is a softy or because he wants to avoid being perceived as patriarchal. Elizabeth, his older and wiser daughter, pleads for her father to *be* a father: "If you, my dear father, will not take the trouble of checking her exuberant spirits, and of teaching her that her present pursuits are not to be the business of her life, she will soon be beyond the reach of amendment. Her character will be fixed."

For boys to reach manhood, they need parents to check their "exuberant spirits," education to refine their vulgarities, and religion to direct their paths. Otherwise they will be "beyond the reach of amendment." ♦

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B&A

Church of State

How is the Almighty treated when He's a guest in the White House? **BY WILLIAM MCKENZIE**

This is a breezy cut-and-paste of the last 50 years of the intersection of religion and politics. Pretty much anyone who has paid attention to the news would know the narrative. From John F. Kennedy's famous Houston speech before a group of skeptical Baptist ministers to George W. Bush's appeal to evangelicals, the account of how faith has shaped the presidency will sound familiar. And in that sense, the work of this professor of religious history at Barnard and Columbia is disappointing. I found myself flipping pages hoping that Balmer's reporting would turn up something new about how each president approached religion.

God in the White House
A History: How Faith Shaped the Presidency from John F. Kennedy to George W. Bush
by Randall Balmer
HarperOne, 256 pp., $14.99

It doesn't, but he does raise two serious questions. Both of them deserve the time and attention of candidates, consultants, and voters during this interregnum between the 2008 and 2012 elections.

First, have candidates gone too far from JFK's response to the Houston ministerial alliance, where he basically said that his faith would not dictate his politics? Second, how culpable are voters in allowing candidates to say one thing about religion and act another way?

The answer to the first question is: Yes, candidates have strayed too far from Kennedy's line. And I write that as one who spends a good bit of time examining the relationship between religion and politics and believe the two forces are inescapably intertwined. They have been and always will be, since both are about values like justice, compassion, and mercy. And people of faith—from Martin Luther King to Jerry Falwell—have acted upon their beliefs to change society. Religious figures and their followers will try to do so in the future, too. And I have no problem with that.

But we're very close to where candidates are manipulating religion for their benefit more than they are acting upon their beliefs. A small anecdote may describe this larger point: Texas governor Rick Perry's last reelection campaign sent out an email that naturally talked about his accomplishments in the recent gathering of the Texas legislature. No problem with that either, but the email was signed by his campaign manager with the salutation of "God bless."

After I got to the end, I thought: Has it come to this? I mean, what does "God bless" have to do with a reelection campaign? Either candidates have grown so used to throwing it out as a walkoff line that they don't think about it or they know full well that the phrase is aimed at a portion of the electorate. Either way, we're at risk of seeing serious faith trivialized and abused. It's especially becoming a prerequisite for presidential candidates to talk about God, which can lead to all sorts of mischief. Political consultants know how to push buttons, so they can easily turn faith into another part of their partisan checklist.

I've found myself wanting to hear some candidate just level with voters and say this really isn't part of who I am. Instead, too many awkwardly try to connect with voters in religious terms. Listening to candidates like Howard Dean talk about religiosity, and confuse what books are in the Old Testament as opposed to the New Testament, is too painful to watch. Just say no, please.

Now the second question, to which the answer also is yes. The problem isn't just the candidates; the populace is equally culpable in the "religionization" of politics. Here's how Balmer puts it:

> We let pols hypnotize us with lullabies about faith and morality, and then we fail to take that rhetoric seriously, much less hold them to the principles they articulate so blithely.

One reason we tolerate inconsistencies, he surmises, is that we want politicians to cleanse our consciences. Consider Jimmy Carter, whose election Balmer explains as a giant purging of our soul. After Richard Nixon, people went for Carter because he sounded upright. Of course, he turned out to be a lesser president, which we ought to remember the next time we go for a moral-sounding candidate. Maybe they will turn out swell; maybe they won't. But their righteousness may not be any kind of predictor.

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Bill Clinton, Billy Graham, 2005

And we really ought to bear down in our thinking about how much we expect our candidates to transcend the standards of the larger culture. Sure, politicians occupy an important space in our lives. They should reach for the next highest rung, inspiring us all to come along with them. But there's a

William McKenzie writes a column for the Dallas Morning News *and is moderator of Texas Faith at www.dallasnews.com/texasfaith.*

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point at which they are only humans, and we shouldn't ask for more.

Finally, we should recognize that presidents particularly play a different role than the rest of us. Balmer tees off against George W. Bush time and again for using torture and other means against terrorists while maintaining a public embrace of Christianity. Fine, accuse him of hypocrisy; but if you're president, and you have to make tough calls, you may find it impossible to act consistently with your faith. You may find yourself having to make nasty decisions for the larger good.

As much as I was disappointed in Balmer's reporting, his two main points are worth considering. We're getting very close to straying too far from that Kennedy speech, and maybe we voters need to be more realistic when we pull the lever. A dose of reality will save us a lot of disappointment in the end. ♦

B&A

Password, Please

The inside story on conspiracy theories.

BY STEFAN BECK

I have an ugly confession to make. I used to entertain myself by composing faux-earnest query letters to conspiracy theorists. "SIR—," one might begin, "I read with interest your recent communiqué regarding the Luciferian symbolism of the 'horned' hand gesture that 'President' George W. Bush has been photographed making. An individual in whom I place considerable trust assures me that this is in fact the 'Hook 'em Horns' hand sign of the University of Texas at Austin, but I suspect that this 'explanation' is no more than Illuminist chicanery. Pls advise."

Cults, Conspiracies, and Secret Societies
The Straight Scoop on Freemasons, The Illuminati, Skull and Bones, Black Helicopters, The New World Order, and Many, Many More
by Arthur Goldwag
Vintage Books, 384 pp., $16

Whatever one thinks of these people, let it not be said that they aren't trying to help. I always received a prompt and (if you will) illuminating reply, in the gentle, patient tone one might take with a child. And it strikes me now, having just read Arthur Goldwag's delightful reference guide, that the conspiracists are right on one point: Things are not always as they seem. My deferential emails were schoolyard taunts, so who's to say such deceptions don't take place on a grander scale? (Hey, at least I acted alone.)

Goldwag's interest in this *outré* subject matter grew, he tells us, from the wreckage of the World Trade Center. "When something momentous happens," he writes, "everything leading up to and away from the event seems momentous too. Even the most trivial detail seems to glow with significance. . . . [This] is also the point of view that cults inculcate in their followers."

This is not to say he has much sympathy for the 9/11 Truth Movement, which "stir[s] up the same feelings in [him] as the writings of Holocaust deniers." But he seems to think that conspiracy theorizing stems from a genuine, albeit misguided, attempt to impose order on a frightening, unpredictable world.

This is a theme common to skeptical approaches to the subject, and it makes sense. The more someone professes to hate the Hidden Hand, the more likely that he wishes it were there. As Kingsley Amis wrote, "The reason Prometheus couldn't get away from his vulture was that he was keen on it, not the other way around." And anyone who's ever asked the obvious question ("Can people really believe this stuff?") should, well, ask it in earnest. The answer may be *no* far more frequently than Goldwag and others are willing to acknowledge. But that doesn't mean people don't wish they believed it.

Goldwag confuses the matter by lumping conspiracists and cultists in the same loony bin. He writes, "what makes a cult cultish is not so much what it espouses, but how much authority its leaders grant themselves—and how slavishly devoted to them its followers are."

What cultists and conspiracy theorists have in common is that they both believe nonsense, but that's as far as it goes. Conspiracists are anything but "slavishly devoted," even to their own "truth." Anyone who follows the "work" of the conspiracist knows that he changes his mind as often as his underwear. (Actually, in this case, that might not be the most apt analogy.) What I mean is that conspiracy theorizing is an exercise in creativity, occasionally a pathological one, but the result is nevertheless more akin to folklore than to dogma.

Pick a theory at random—crack and AIDS developed by the CIA; FEMA concentration camps; the government in thrall to extraterrestrial or demonic powers—and ask yourself why the people who purport to believe these things haven't quit their jobs at Blockbuster and GameStop and headed for the hills. After all, that's what cultists do; some of them, like Heaven's Gate, even commit suicide *en masse.* Why are conspiracists so comfortable living in so ghastly a reality?

Goldwag's expertly cross-referenced assemblage of strange theories, of the cults that hold them dear, and of the tenebrous groups and secret societies that are their bread and butter, holds the skeleton key: It's fun. It's fascinating. Above all, it's easy. Truth may be stranger than fiction, but it also often calls for hard work. If al Qaeda obliterated the WTC, something must be done about it—sacrifices must be made.

Stefan Beck writes on fiction for the New Criterion *and elsewhere.*

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If some unnameable and unknowable cabal is responsible, there's little one can do but sip Mountain Dew at the keyboard and blog about it.

Of course, conspiracy theories have served the purposes of real, violent movements. Anti-Semitic myths, from the notorious fabrication *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* to the belief that the Rothschild family precipitates wars in order to profit from them, have been particularly and tragically long-lived. (Goldwag discusses both in considerable detail.) But these myths seem to be more a symptom than a disease, token justifications of—or clumsy, if effective, propaganda for—an irrational hatred that would exist with or without them.

Many more benign conspiracy theories gain traction this way, by reinforcing cultural trends and preoccupations already in the air. Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*, with its baroque amalgamation of stories about Mary Magdalene, the Knights Templar, the Priory of Sion, Opus Dei, and of course Leonardo Da Vinci, is a good example. It didn't *create* suspicion of the Roman Catholic Church, or disdain for its teachings, but its popularity revealed that those feelings had reached a fever pitch. Do people believe the book contains any literal truth? Some, perhaps, but we may assume that most simply enjoy a swipe at the authority of the Big Bad Church. As Ross Douthat recently wrote, Brown's "theology" is that "all religions . . . have the potential to be wonderful, so long as we can get over the idea that any one of them might be particularly true." The public is buying it.

In light of this, it's worth asking whether an interest in conspiracy theories ever derives from guilt. The average theory uproots garden-variety badness—incompetence in high office, greed, cowardice, and so on—and replaces it with truly exotic, hothouse evil. Those who worship Mammon become those who literally worship Satan. A political figure who commits adultery becomes a practitioner of Illuminist sex magic involving children and animals. The problem, psychologically, seems to be that if those with power and influence aren't several orders of magnitude worse than you or I, we all have just as much to answer for. We're denied the comfort of shouting "I'm just a patsy!" as we are, so to speak, dragged off to hell.

It's easy to see how one might take a kind of comfort in these stories. But there is a more legitimate and abiding comfort to be taken in Goldwag's book, particularly in the Secret Societies section. It is loaded with proof that human beings really aren't so bad, and that even at their worst they're rarely capable of as much mischief as their paranoid critics imagine.

Most "secret" societies are, as most adults know, charitable fellowships, whose patina of secrecy is in the name of good-natured fun—unfortunately, as Goldwag notes, not fun enough to keep membership rolls from shrinking. This is too bad, as these groups, from the despised Masons to the more often ridiculed Rotary Club, Elks, Kiwanis, Knights of Columbus, and so on, have done plenty of good and no harm to speak of. Goldwag might have mentioned Mooseheart, a "child city" that has been operated by the Moose fraternal order since 1913, and a testament to the unambiguous benevolence of these benevolent associations.

Other such fraternities are more self-serving, but similar in the willful juvenility of their secrets: See Yale's Skull and Bones, which has lost its mystique thanks to the efforts of journalists Ron Rosenbaum and Alexandra Robbins, or the Bohemian Grove, a California retreat where the country's most influential men gather to get trashed in the shadow of a giant stone owl, much to the consternation of Internet-based losers like Alex Jones. When I worked as an editor, a writer who shall remain nameless boasted to me that his piece was late because he was partying at the Grove. This was no more sinister than a sorority girl proudly showing off her first pair of Greek letter "butt pants"—though, in my view, far less impressive.

The only groups we need fear, it seems, are street and prison gangs—the latter have, particularly in Southern California, projected their reach well outside the razor-wire—and organized crime syndicates. But far from being fit objects for thrilling speculation, they epitomize the banality and predictability of evil. They're in it for the money, plain and simple. Conspiracy theorists at their best envision a world in which the stakes are higher and more interesting than that, in which men and women have not only bank accounts but also souls to empty out. And for all the gibberish they believe, or pretend to believe, is that really quite so crazy? ♦

Skull and Bones at Yale, 2003

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B&A

Thinking Big

Herman Kahn didn't shrink from the fundamental questions. **BY GARY SCHMITT**

Herman Kahn, 1968

When Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove* first appeared in movie theaters in 1964, it was Peter Sellers's portrayal of the wheelchair-bound, ex-Nazi adviser to the president on nuclear strategy that grabbed the most attention from audiences and, to this day, remains the most memorable role in the film. Based on Strangelove's hilarious discussion of possible plans for living in a post-nuclear-war world—including the need for a 10:1 ratio of females to males in order to repopulate the country—movie historians have linked the role, in part, to the Cold War nuclear strategist Herman Kahn. Given Kahn's own writing about fighting and surviving a nuclear war, it was no surprise that he became a prime target of the disarmament crowd in the early 1960s.

And Herman Kahn was no small target. He was an immense man, standing over six feet tall and weighing some 300 pounds, with an equally impressive intellect and gift (and love) for driving public policy debates. On the staff at the RAND Corporation in the 1950s, he was part of a group of mathematicians, physicists, and economists who gave the emerging discipline of nuclear strategy far greater depth and sophistication than it had ever had before. After leaving RAND, he founded the Hudson Institute, a think tank with a reputation for addressing some of the most difficult and challenging policy disputes of the day. Kahn died in 1983 after a massive stroke, age 61.

The Essential Herman Kahn
In Defense of Thinking
edited by Paul Dragos Aligica and Kenneth R. Weinstein
Lexington, 286 pp., $29.95

What has been missing is a single volume providing access to Kahn's thought and, more important, his insights on how to think about public policy. That has now been remedied by *The Essential Herman Kahn.* Edited and introduced by Paul Dragos Aligica and Kenneth Weinstein, it is a compilation of two dozen selections from Kahn's writings intended to provide today's reader with a sense of the substance of Kahn's work and also of his approach to tackling issues.

Broken into four parts, *The Essential Herman Kahn* reflects his wide range of interests: from nuclear strategy to prospects for economic growth, from the state of Western culture to methodologies for forecasting. Kahn, as one might guess, would be no easy man to condense; but Aligica and Weinstein have done a remarkably good job of it.

Included in this collection is Kahn's effort to battle with the cultural and economic pessimism of the late 1960s and 1970s. The arguments of the limits-to-growth crowd were as shoddy and lacking in analytic rigor then as they appear today under the new green consciousness. If Kahn were alive he would, no doubt, have been at the forefront of dismantling the likes of Al Gore.

But Kahn was not a conservative thinker in the sense that preserving the status quo was foremost in his mind. Although deeply appreciative of the many past factors that were required to bring about vast improvement in human welfare, he was also fully aware that there is no stopping the train of history. His analysis, insights, hopes, and worries about the ramifications of the post-industrial age we had just entered are still of value today. Indeed, as the editors point out, one problem in assessing Kahn's place in the realm of public intellectuals is that "an important part of the ideas he promoted meanwhile have become part of the public discourse in such a profound manner that now we tend to take them for granted."

That said, and despite his capacity to deliver his ideas in a grand, china-rattling fashion, Kahn's own views about how best to think about the future were essentially modest. A substantial part of the *Essential Kahn* is his admonition that policy analysts need not only

TIME & LIFE PICTURES / GETTY

Gary Schmitt is resident scholar and director of advanced strategic studies at the American Enterprise Institute.

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to think rigorously and seriously about the future—what he sometimes referred to as attempts to "stretch the imagination"—but to understand the limits of what they can predict. There were certainly tools to be employed, like extrapolations from current trends, or the use of analogies from history; but they could be abused just as easily as not. The proper perspective for a futurologist was to understand he was engaged in a kind of "planned muddling through."

Nor was Kahn unaware of the impact such studies might have on the future itself. Analyzing where civilization might be taking us is not some dry, purely scientific endeavor. To the contrary, how mankind thinks about its future can't help but have an impact on how that future unfolds. Writing in the late 1970s, but with words just as relevant today, Kahn noted that "perhaps the single most important thing" an analyst like himself could do "would be to substitute reasonably accurate positive images of the future for the depressing images that now prevail." There was, he thought, something deeply troubling about the West's loss of confidence in itself.

The black humor of *Dr. Strangelove* was a small but not atypical reflection of that fact. And obviously, Peter Sellers's portrayal of Strangelove was not meant to be a sympathetic one. But typically missed by the critics is the fact that the movie itself pays considerable, if unintentional, homage to Kahn's own views that the prevailing theories of nuclear deterrence were inadequate and, indeed, dangerous. Although the script was written by Stanley Kubrick and Terry Southern, the subtext is pure Herman Kahn.

Kahn had ridiculed the concept of mutual assured destruction (appropriately dubbed MAD) by extrapolating it to its logical, technological conclusion: the creation of a "doomsday machine" in which an attack, even a limited nuclear attack by an adversary, would result in an automatic, computer-generated release of a world-destroying stockpile of hydrogen bombs. Kahn's point was that a model of deterrence that rested on the certainty of total annihilation should a war begin was strategically absurd and self-defeating since it was highly unlikely any president would ever pull that trigger.

In the movie it's the Russians who have built the doomsday machine, and it is Dr. Strangelove who tells the president that, yes, he too had thought about such a machine but "my conclusion was that this idea was not a practical deterrent for reasons which at this moment must be all too obvious." To which the president, now knowing that all of civilization is about to be destroyed, says simply: "This is absolute madness." As, indeed, it was.

Along with his fellow RAND and Hudson strategists, Herman Kahn got the last laugh by continuing to think about the unthinkable and, in turn, making sure that American strategic thought did not end in a simple-minded nihilism. ♦

B&A

New Democrats

Seeds of change in unfertile ground. **BY JAMES KIRCHICK**

The debate over democratization in the Middle East took on a new sense of urgency following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and it has mostly revolved around questions of what the United States should or should not do.

After centuries of American involvement in the region, it took a massive terrorist attack on our soil to persuade most citizens and policymakers that propping up dictatorial regimes might be contributing to national security threats rather than keeping them at bay. How to change the contours of the policy status quo is a question that has dominated the halls of official Washington over the past eight years. But missing from this sweeping discussion of grand strategy, thus far, has been a serious consideration of the figures who will be essential to remaking the Middle East: Muslim liberals.

The Next Founders
Voices of Democracy in the Middle East
by Joshua Muravchik
Encounter, 350 pp., $25.95

In this important new book, Joshua Muravchik challenges this myopia by profiling seven heroic individuals—campaigning for democracy in places ranging from Iran to the Palestinian Territories to Syria—who have devoted their lives to democratizing some of the most repressive and backward societies on earth. Their struggles are not only inspiring, but offer important lessons to those here in America who want their visions to take root.

Muravchik compares his subjects to the Founders—and with good reason. A common trait among them is a familiarity with and enthusiasm for classical liberal values such as freedom of speech and association, free elections, and the rule of law. All have lived in either the United States or another Western country, experiencing the freedoms that their own nations denied them. Muravchik argues that we should increase opportunities for students in the Muslim world who seek education here: the most effective way, in his view, to combat the virulent anti-American sentiment that has taken hold in the region.

Along with their positive encounters with America and the West, the Next Founders have all been personally affected by the brutality of the authoritarian regimes under whose thumb they endure. Take Mohsen Sazegara, a onetime Iranian revolutionary and

James Kirchick, assistant editor at the New Republic, *is a Phillips Foundation journalism fellow.*

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cofounder of the Revolutionary Guard Corps, one of the most reactionary and brutal forces in contemporary Iran. Sazegara played a key role in the Islamic Revolution, accompanying the exiled Ayatollah Khomeini on his plane from Paris to Tehran in 1979.

Yet it was not long before Sazegara was falsely accused of cooperating with counterrevolutionaries and thrown into the notorious Evin prison, where he came face-to-face with the brutality of the Iranian regime's penal system, its arbitrary abuses and petty cruelties. Having endured such a soul-shattering experience, it is understandable how someone—no matter how committed they might have once been to radical ideals such as Islamic revolution or Arab nationalism—would turn against their erstwhile cause.

The most inspiring individual profiled here is Mithal al-Alusi, an Iraqi politician who gained notoriety in his own country not only for visiting Israel (illegal under Iraqi law), but for publicly encouraging an alliance between the two nations. For this brave act he paid with the lives of his two sons, killed in an assassination attempt he barely escaped. Yet the murder of his own children did not dissuade al-Alusi from politics, or from seeking a rapprochement with Israel: He has only become more outspoken in his calls for a normalized relationship between the Arab world and the Jewish state.

One of the more obnoxious mantras of the past decade has been the claim that the United States and its Western allies cannot "impose democracy from the barrel of a gun" on authoritarian societies in the Muslim world. Since the 2003 invasion of Iraq, this argument has broadened to characterize any sort of democracy promotion as an expression of American arrogance and "hubris."

Such sentiment ignores the desires of countless people throughout the Middle East who wish to live in free societies but lack the power to bring about such monumental changes on their own. One of the most illuminating observations here comes from the Egyptian newspaper publisher Hisham Kassem, who maintains that the liberation of Iraq remains justified. "By military intervention," he told *Time*, "the [United States] is able to pressure the region into adopting the reforms we are beginning to see across the region that might avert many countries from becoming failed states."

With these seven profiles of Muslim reformers, Sunni and Shia alike, Muravchik shows that the longing to be free is something fundamental to the human condition, and a sentiment that extends across the Middle East. It is also a real cause to which brave souls are willing to risk their lives. Given this fact, the question for Americans—whose sympathies naturally lie with unarmed Iranians shot dead in the streets by a fascist clerical regime, imprisoned Egyptian democracy activists, and Kuwaiti and Saudi women campaigning for equality—is what are we willing to do to help them succeed? ♦

B&A

Triple Feature

A once-in-a-lifetime moment in baseball.

BY JOE QUEENAN

Old timers insist that if you go to a baseball game, you will always see something you never saw before. On Sunday, August 23, I saw something at Citi Field in Queens that nobody had ever seen before: the first unassisted game-ending triple play in the history of the National League.

In fact, I saw a lot of things I had never seen before: the first time I saw the Philadelphia Phillies, a team I have followed since 1959, score six runs in the first inning; the first time I saw a ball snared beneath the outfield matting turn into an inside-the-park home run; the first time I ever saw a pitcher removed from a game in the middle of a pitch count (3-0) to another pitcher. You can't even get the pitcher out, is what Mets manager Jerry Manuel was telling Oliver Perez in front of 40,000 jeering fans. You don't belong in the majors.

You'd have to attend basketball, hockey, or football games every day for the next 300 years to personally witness this much weirdness in a single contest. This is why baseball is, and always will be, the national pastime. It is mankind's finest achievement.

Joe Queenan is the author, most recently, of Closing Time: A Memoir.

The triple play was fraught with irony. For starters, the goat—Mets right-fielder Jeff Francoeur—had been a hero the previous inning when he snared a sinking line drive, turning a triple into an out. Initially, the second-base umpire ruled that Francoeur had trapped the ball. But now with the batter, whose three earlier hits had lifted his average from .128 to a gaudy .154, standing on third, the umpire consulted with his colleagues and reversed his own decision.

It was the right call, but a spineless one. An umpire cannot transmogrify a triple into an out just because the fans are booing him, since the other umps could not possibly have seen the play any better than he did.

This cheesy decision was reached right after the public address announcer informed the crowd that all fans sitting in Section 354, who had previously been told they were eligible for free fast food because the Mets had pilfered three bases in one game, had not actually won the prize. The complimentary vittles were going to the fans in an entirely different section. The error was blamed on "a computer glitch."

So now, literally hundreds of long-suffering Mets fans were going to have to tell their starving children—smack-

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dab in the middle of the worst recession since 1929—that chicken fingers for the entire family were out. And the Mets still wonder why they are not viewed with the same respect as the Yankees. I had never witnessed anything like this at a baseball game before.

The runner who had been stripped of a triple, and of the first four-hit game in his career, was Phillies utility fielder Eric Bruntlett. Bruntlett was so enraged that he at first refused to leave third base. Umps can give ballplayers the old heave-ho for showing them up like this, but not this time. Eventually the sullen Bruntlett vacated the base and headed back to his position. It was Bruntlett who executed the triple play minutes later.

What elevated this event to an even more vertiginous level of mythological anomalousness was that, by butchering the two previous ground balls, Bruntlett had put himself in a position to execute a play that will be talked about for years, if not millennia. Bruntlett was only in the game because the Phils had given the sure-handed Chase Utley the day off. In fact, Bruntlett, a dud both in the field and at the plate this season, was only on the team because he had become a folk hero of sorts by scoring the run that won the World Series for the Phillies last year.

Yes, it was Bruntlett's ineptness, combined with the Mets' inexplicable decision to attempt a double steal while trailing by two runs in the bottom of the ninth, that meant that he was inches away from second base when Francoeur's line drive shot right up the middle and into his glove. Without the double steal, the ball would have ripped into center field, scoring the runner from second and leaving the Mets with men at first and second with nobody out. And Francoeur, now forever linked in baseball lore with Bruntlett, would have been even more of a hero than he already was.

After Bruntlett's play—catching Francoeur's line drive, stepping on second, and tagging the Mets' Daniel Murphy—the crowd reacted in a very subdued fashion. Basically, no one in the entire stadium (Francoeur included) understood what had happened. The Phillies lined up and high-fived one another in a surprisingly casual manner, given that they had just witnessed a game-ending play that had never before occurred in a National League game, and had only occurred one other time in the history of baseball when Johnny Neun of the Detroit Tigers executed a game-ending unassisted triple play back in 1927.

The most amazing thing for me was how close I came to missing the whole thing. I was only at the game because a Mets fan I know could not bear to watch the inept, injury-plagued home team any longer and gave me the tickets. When it started to shower that morning, I almost decided to stay home because I do not like watching Philadelphia teams play in New York stadiums, especially in the rain. Then, as Phils closer Brad Lidge, who is having a truly nightmarish season, was getting ready to pitch to Francoeur, I felt my throat drying up and went off in search of water. Luckily, the upper deck in right field at Citi Field doesn't have any water fountains—even though the fatso manning the Fan Assistance desk did not know this—and even though the Pepsi Porch is a Saharan sun field where one day some fan will actually die of dehydration.

Because there was no water to be found, I returned to the stands—just in time to see the once-in-a-lifetime triple play. After the game, some of my friends said it was horribly unfair for Utley to miss out on this chance at baseball immortality. But as Utley is going to Cooperstown on the first ballot, he already has a loftier brand of immortality locked up. Moreover, had Utley been in the game, there would have been no chance for a triple play because the two previous batters would never have reached base.

Eric Bruntlett, right, tags Daniel Murphy.

HENNY RAY ABRAMS / AP PHOTO

Or would they? The next day, on the very first Mets at-bat, Utley dropped a routine pop fly, then threw wildly past second, allowing the batter to round the bases. The Met scoring that inside-the-park-home-run-via-double-error was Angel Pagan, who had hit the bizarre inside-the-park four-bagger that lodged under the center field matting the day before. Utley had never made two errors on the same play in his entire career.

And some people still wonder why soccer will never catch on in this country. ♦

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"A 'profanity-laced screaming match' at the White House involving CIA Director Leon Panetta, and the expected release today of another damning internal investigation, has administration officials worrying about the direction of its newly-appointed intelligence team, current and former senior intelligence officials tell ABC News.com."

—ABC News.com, August 24, 2009

THE WHITE HOUSE

FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY August 22, 2009

CONTINUED:

wee-weeing all over your pants.

PANETTA: For the sake of the country, I ask you to reconsider.

EMANUEL: Yeah, I'll [expletive] reconsider. I'll [expletive] reconsider whether or not I'm gonna take that shiny [expletive] rug off your [expletive] head!

PANETTA: I'm serious, Rahm. We're talking about national security here. Eric is going to put the agency in a very dangerous position.

HOLDER: Now hold on, mother-[expletive]. I'm just doing my job here. Those memos are just way too hot. I can't just sit on them. Make pretend they don't exist. [expletive] that [expletive].

PANETTA: Mr. President, surely you can intercede?

OBAMA: Do you have faith in my judgment?

PANETTA: Yes.

OBAMA: Do I have your loyalty?

PANETTA: Yes, always Mr. President.

OBAMA: Then be a friend to Rahm. Do as he says.

EMANUEL: You heard the man, Leon. Now [expletive] me.

PANETTA: Excuse me?

EMANUEL: Excuse you! You'd be a State Department [expletive]-stain if it wasn't for us! So run along now and tell those Langley [expletives] to deal with it. And make way for that special prosecutor. He's gonna be all over your [expletive].

HOLDER: Like flies on [expletive].

PANETTA: [expletive] you.

EMANUEL: How dare you try to engage me in a profanity-laced screaming match in front of the

- 37 -

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